South Haven
Tribune

$3

October 26, 2025

SH approves infrastructure projects

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven City Council is focusing on a series of infrastructure projects aimed at improving streets and utilities across the city.

On Monday, the city council approved engineering services for the conceptual design of Bailey Avenue from Wilson Street to East Wells Street with OHM in the amount of $40,000.

"We've known for some time that area of Bailey, from Wilson Street to East Wells, is in dire need of reconstruction," City Manager Kate Hosier said. "(The) previous public works director looked at that, and we were estimating that to be about $1 million."

In 2020, city staff investigated construction options for the area including full-street reconstruction with a 10-foot-wide bike path, resurfacing and making the street a one-way with a bike lane and restriping only and making the street a one-way with a bike lane.

"We do want to take another look at that with some engineering services, so we'll be utilizing OHM to do a review of that and consider a conceptual design of what that may look like," Hosier said.

City staff is currently looking into additional options for long-term and short-term reconstruction with possible utility improvements.

"We are just asking counsel that we engage with an engineering consultant to kind of help us vet through some of that and look at some of the complex aspects of the site because there is a lot of slope along that road," Public Works Director Dana Burd said. "There's a lot of guardrail and it's next to the cemetery. ... so, to really kind of go over that history and come up with a good set of concepts in both the short term and the long term will really help us in our future planning."

Council Member Mary Hosley said she is concerned about how the curves and slopes along the road could impact the wildlife in the area.

"Well, it's up a slope quite a ways, so that's something we could discuss with OHM to see what kind of concern, you know, they might have with that," Burd said. "There could be some lowland impact along the lower edge of the slope there and we would

See **PROJECTS**, page A6

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

Dwelling Place representatives speak during a community engagement meeting Monday, where they presented updates on the Overton development project and answered questions from the community.

Dwelling Place officials talk details for Overton project

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Dwelling Place presented updates on the Overton project and took questions from the South Haven community during a special meeting Monday.

It marked the first of three public engagement meetings the company plans to hold for the housing project that has been years in the making.

Dwelling Place Director of Community Building Engagement Latrishia Sosebee, Director of Real Estate Development Nathan Poel, Land Acquisition and Development Analyst Matt Szuminski and Architect and Owner Issac Norris spoke during the meeting.

Norris previously worked on the Overton project when Habitat for Humanity was in charge of the project.

Several community members brought up concerns, including environmental issues, the size of the houses and apartments, green space and landscaping, amenities, fitting into the neighborhood and what developers mean when they say "affordable housing."

The representatives said the focus of this project is to create middle-income and workforce housing. However, Sosebee said housing with income-based rent is not the type of housing they are planning on building for the Overton site. Dwelling Place currently has 1,100 housing units across four counties.

Architect Issac Norris presents the previous site plan and the current site plan for the Overton project at a community engagement meeting Monday in South Haven.

The site plan for the Overton project includes two components – multi-family rental and community land trust homeownership.

For multi-family renting, the plan is to have a three-story apartment building with 53 one- and two-bedroom apartments with 60 to 80 parking spots along with building amenities including a community room, rooftop garden and leasing office.

For homeownership, the proposal includes 20 total homes with 10 duplexes and two single-family homes. The homes will be two stories tall with three to four bedrooms, up to two bathrooms, a driveway and a garage.

Dwelling Place representatives said these plans are not final and subject to change as the project progresses.

The biggest concern attendees expressed was the environmental concerns with the site.

"The state of Michigan is very strict when it comes to any environmental concerns," Szuminski said. "So, we have to go through and do, we'll do a phase one testing which, they basically just look at the history and look at the site and say, 'OK these are potential issues that we could find,' and then we go and do investigative reporting. We'll do a phase two test, which will dig into the ground, see what's in there. ... If we think that there's pollutants or underground storage tanks deep underground, we can get a geotechnical service out there to bore down to see what actually is underground."

He said they will conduct other tests, including noise testing and looking for vapor or radon mitigation that needs to be done. After the tests are done, the samples will be sent to Michigan State Housing Development Authority and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy for review.

The next community engagement meetings, scheduled for noon and 5:30 p.m. on Nov. 3, will focus on building designs.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

South Haven celebrates completion of new water tank

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Members of the South Haven community recently joined the South Haven Area Water Sewer Authority to watch the new elevated water storage tank be lifted to its permanent position above the South Haven skyline.

According to a news release, this project is a major investment in South Haven's infrastructure ensuring reliable service for decades to come.

The water tower is a composite-tank with a concrete pedestal and upper steel bowl that stands 160 feet high.

The bowl holds one million gallons of clean drinking water and provided system pressure and storage.

The foundation is 32-foot in diameter, contains 730 tons of concrete and extends 80 feet below ground.

The tank was built by Landmark Structures, designed by Fishbeck and the logo was painted by MC Sandblasting and Painting.

"A groundbreaking ceremony was held roughly one-year ago to celebrate the start of SHAWSA's multi-year, $42 million in capital improvements projects planned to upgrade and improve the area's water and sewer infrastructure," the release stated.

To help offset costs, the water sewer authority secured $22 million in loans and $20 million in grants from state and federal agencies.

The water sewer authority's capital projects currently under construction include:

■ The new elevated water storage tank, booster pump station and associated

See **WATER TANK**, page A2

As heat gets more extreme, pregnant farmworkers are increasingly at risk

By DORANY PINEDA, MELINA WALLING and ANNIKA HAMMERSCHLAG
Associated Press

One hot day last summer, Clarisa Lugo was inspecting and counting corn and soybean plants in the middle of a 300-acre farm field in Illinois when she started throwing up and panting. Her heart raced, she stopped sweating and a pounding headache didn't go away for hours.

The heat index – a blend of temperature and humidity – had hit 105 F, and Lugo, who was eight months pregnant, was suffering from heat illness.

"I remember that that day it was hard for me to go back to normal" despite drinking water and putting ice on her body, she recalled.

Agricultural workers are already among the most vulnerable to extreme heat, and pregnant workers are coming under greater risk as temperatures rise because of climate change. Many in the U.S. are low-income Latino immigrants who toil under the sizzling sun or in humid nurseries open year round. Heat exposure has been linked to many extra risks for pregnant people, and while protections exist, experts say they need better enforcement and more safeguards are needed.

Compounding these risks is the Trump administration's immigration crackdown. Many people are too afraid to seek medical and maternal care, according to research and interviews with advocates and health care

See **HEAT**, page A2

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 126th Year

Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

OBITUARIES

Wayne Perrino

Feb. 19, 1939 – Oct. 14, 2025

Wayne Edward Perrino, of Paw Paw, Mich., age 86, died on Oct. 14, 2025. He was born Feb. 19, 1939 in Chicago, Ill. to Anthony and Natalie Perrino.

He was an enthusiastic golfer and fisherman, often spending his days at his favorite spots. Wayne's love for gaming was evident through his frequent visits to Fire Keepers and his reputation as an adept poker player. Monday's poker games were sacred. He cherished those days with his close friends.

Beyond his hobbies, Wayne was a devoted fan of the Chicago Bears and the Cubs, embodying the true spirit of a Chicago sports fan. His loyalty and humor were the hallmarks of his personality, making him a beloved figure among his family and friends.

Wayne's generosity and loyalty extended beyond his immediate circle, touching the lives of many. He loved his family profoundly and was known for his funny and generous nature, always ready to lend a hand or share a laugh.

He was preceded in death by his wife Lois Perrino, his parents; brother Manny Perrino, brother in-law Bob Kaliterna, and special cousin Michael Ventrelli.

Surviving are his children: Marrietta (Terry) Davis, Cathy Perrino, and April Stainbrook; grandchildren: Summar (Dan Murray) Thompson and their children Eliza and Iris, Natalie Panek and her children Sophie, Gaia, and Harper, James Wayne Panek and his children Tyus and Laina, Jason John, Crystal Freeman, Nicole Stainbrook, Amanda Lewis and her children Jaxton and Jade, and Trevor Davis; siblings: Natalie Kaliterna and Mike (Theresa) Perrino; nieces and nephews: Kristen, Angel, and Tony; special cousin Pete Ventrelli; as well as many more family and friends.

A small graveside service for family will be held at noon on Wednesday, Oct. 22 at Wildey Cemetery, 114 N. Gremps Street Paw Paw, Michigan 49079 with a celebration of life memorial to be scheduled.

Celebrate Wayne's life online by sharing your favorite stories and photos on his dedicated webpage at BetzlerLifeStory.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In support of Brown

Dear editor,

I think Annie Brown is the best choice for Mayor of South Haven.

The mayor is responsible to represent everyone that owns property in the city, I think Annie does.

Locals know that there are owners that have short-term rentals, there are owners that have done rentals for 10 years and paid off their homes, there are owners that rent in summer to be able to stay in their home, there are owners that fixed up an old home and rent in summer.

I think Annie listens to all viewpoints and shows up for everyone.

Patti Sheehy
South Haven

Engaged and invested

Dear editor,

As the Nov. 4, 2025, general election grows closer, it's important to recognize the history, character and commitment to the community of mayoral candidate, Annie Brown.

Annie is incredibly engaged and invested in countless areas of the South Haven community, giving new meaning to the term "showing up". Annie served on the South Haven school board for 14 years! That commitment to supporting the schools and the students is evident as she regularly takes time to attend the school sporting events to cheer on the local teams. You'll also see her at Listiak Auditorium encouraging the students of the arts.

In addition to supporting the schools, Annie is always in attendance at community events including joining the South Haven Chamber in welcoming new businesses, making her a welcome and constant presence that can be completely counted on!

During my 20 years working in hospitality in South Haven, every time I reached out to Annie to say a few words at an event, lend a hand, or whatever was needed, she always answered my call and participated.

A proven leader, she doesn't shy away from the tough issues and the conversations that go along with those issues. It's evident that Annie is advocating and working towards finding middle ground between the year-round residents and visitors.

She is determined to increase affordable housing, bring in new jobs, and improve South Haven's streets and sidewalks, all while supporting tourism and welcoming visitors.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Lori Krieger
South Haven

Calm management

Dear editor,

I have known Annie for decades through our political work. She has helped me with several issues within the city, besides her campaign work. I know I can trust her to do what she says. As we all know, trust is more important in politics than ever. As Mayor of South Haven, she has made improvements in our city, but what I like the best is being able to call her when I have an issue with the city. She has always supported me (which probably means we agree on many issues).

It's a real balancing act managing our city with short-term rentals, the festivals, keeping the permanent residents happy, and making our visitors welcome. Annie has managed this with her happy continence and her willingness to speak her mind.

A vote for Annie is a vote calm management with a great personality.

Judith Stimson
South Haven

Brimming with potential

Dear editor,

South Haven is a community brimming with beauty and potential, but over the past year, our City Council has seemingly lost sight of the bigger picture.

For months, certain council members have focused almost entirely on one issue while other pressing priorities like housing and jobs have been pushed aside. Meetings have been marked by last-minute changes, rewrites and confusion. This is not effective leadership; it is dysfunction.

Our city deserves better. We deserve a council that can manage more than one issue at a time, communicates clearly, and leads with purpose, not chaos.

This November, we have the power to make a change. I urge my fellow South Haven residents to pay attention, get informed and please vote.

I support Eddie Polk, Tom Capps and Annie Brown. Let's elect leaders who will serve all of South Haven, not just one agenda.

Amanda Soukup
South Haven

HEAT

From page A1

providers, and are increasingly fearful of retribution if they advocate for safe work environments.

The Associated Press interviewed four agricultural workers who recounted experiences of working in extreme heat while pregnant. Three spoke under the condition of anonymity because they're in the country illegally or fear reprisals from their employers.

Temperature rise in big agricultural states

California, one of the nation's most agriculturally productive states, employed more than 893,000 agricultural workers in 2023, according to state data. Iowa, also among the top 10 agriculture-producing states, provides more than 385,000 jobs in the agriculture industry, according to a 2024 study.

Since the start of the 20th century, California temperatures have increased almost 3 F, according to state and federal data. Warming has accelerated, and seven of the past eight years in that state through 2024 were the warmest on record. Iowa has seen temperatures increase by more than 1 F during the same period while in Florida, another big agriculture state, average temperatures have increased by more than 2 F.

When it comes to how the body reacts, even small temperature increases can make a difference.

One study found that agricultural workers had more than 35 times the risk of heat-related deaths than other workers. But deaths are hard to track and are likely undercounted. In the U.S., an estimated one-third of farmworkers are women – an increasing share of the farm workforce.

Lugo and her baby ended up fine. But others haven't been so lucky.

As one nursery worker in Florida put it: "I've wanted to leave this work," but "I have to fight for my children."

Dangers of heat and exertion

An agricultural worker recalled working in a Florida nursery in 2010 amid intense heat. She was four months pregnant and would spend hours carrying heavy pots of plants and bent over weeding and planting indoor foliage such as monsteras. At work one day, she felt painful abdominal cramping. She knew something was wrong when she saw blood in the toilet.

"(At the hospital) they told me that I had already lost the baby," she said. She believes the physical work combined with heat caused her miscarriage.

Another nursery worker in Florida worked four months into her pregnancy in 2024, vomiting – sometimes after drinking water – and feeling nausea and headaches in part because of the heat.

Her baby was born prematurely, at seven months. "(The doctor) told me that I spent too much time bent over ... and I wasn't eating well for the same reason, because of the heat," she said.

Pregnancy increases the risks of extreme heat because the body has to work harder to cool down. Heat exposure has been linked to increased risk of miscarriages, stillbirths, preterm births, low birth weight and birth defects.

Combining pregnancy and heat with physical labor can more quickly overwhelm the body's cooling system, increasing the likelihood of dehydration, heat illness and heat stroke. Even short-term exposure to heat can increase the risk of severe maternal health complications, such as high blood pressure disorders of pregnancy, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

In the worst cases, it can kill.

Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez was 17 and two months pregnant when she died in 2008 from heatstroke after pruning grapes in a California farm. Her supervisors failed to provide shade and water while she worked for hours in nearly triple-digit heat, authorities said.

California's outdoor heat standard, enacted in 2005, was later named in Jimenez's honor.

Unclear how sporadic regulations may benefit farmworkers

No federal heat protections exist in the U.S., although the Trump administration appears to be moving forward with a proposed rule. Some states, including California and Washington, have their own protections, while others, like Texas and Florida, have barred local governments from implementing their own. In states with protections, advocates say they're not adequately enforced and pointed to a widespread distrust of reporting systems.

More than 30 states and cities have laws requiring employers to provide accommodations for pregnant workers. Most recently, 2023's federal Pregnant Workers Fairness Act requires employers to provide "reasonable accommodations" to pregnant workers, those who recently gave birth or have medical conditions related to birth or pregnancy unless they will cause the employer "undue hardship." Other laws make it illegal to fire or discriminate due to those factors.

Even so, there aren't enough legal protections for pregnant workers, said Ayana DeGaia, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Washington in Harborview. "It's probably one of the reasons why we have some of the highest rates of maternal and infant mortality in high-income countries in the world," she said.

It's also unclear how some of these protections benefit women farmworkers, said Alexis Handal, an associate professor at the University of Michigan, who led a recent study examining the experiences of the state's women farmworkers.

In Florida, a top U.S. producer of indoor plants and tropical foliage, the nursery industry's mostly women workers have joined a fight for heat protections. In California, workers have been advocating for guaranteed compensation when they lose wages due to heat waves and other extreme weather events, as well as extra pay when they work during dangerous weather conditions.

Immigration enforcement compounds challenges to care

Trump's immigration crackdown has instilled deep fear in immigrant communities.

In California, a physician said her clinic recently had a patient suspected of carrying a fetus with birth defects. They set her up for specialty consultation and care about two hours from home. But the woman couldn't access that care during her pregnancy. Arranging transportation and child care was difficult. The overarching reason, however, was fear, in part of being detained, said Dr. Katherine Gabriel-Cox, director of obstetrics, midwifery and gynecology at Salud Para La Gente, a community health center.

She added that she hears similar stories "over and over."

It's a growing concern nationally. Health care providers have reported seeing fewer walk-ins, patients delaying prenatal care, and more pregnant patients whose first doctor's visit was for labor and delivery, according to a brief published in April by the group Physicians for Human Rights. Others have reported an increase in no-shows and canceled appointments.

Photo provided / Tom Renner

Members of the South Haven community joined the South Haven Area Water Sewer Authority to watch the new elevated water storage tank be lifted to its permanent position.

WATER TANK

From page A1

piping to help deliver clean water to residential, business and school customers. This project is supported by a $9.1 million American Rescue Plan Act grant and a U.S. Department of Agriculture low-interest loan.

- ■ Replacing 2,100 lead service lines within the next three years to comply with the Safe Water Drinking Act. These replacements are supported by a state of Michigan low-interest loan and $5.7 million in grant funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law through EGLE's State Revolving Fund program.
- ■ A water main extension to provide increased reliability linking Covert Township and the water sewer authority's water systems.
- ■ Improving disinfection and biological treatment at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. This project is supported by a $3.65 million American Rescue Plan Act grant and state Revolving Fund loan.
- ■ Addressing high-water issues on Lake Michigan and ensuring water quality at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, made possible through a $1.5 million grant from the state of Michigan's High Water Infrastructure Grant Program.

For questions about the projects, contact Public Works Director Dana Burd at 269-637-0737.

Al-Van Humane Society
Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate
73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Luke!

At 6½ years old, Luke has the perfect mix of playful energy and laid-back charm. This handsome guy recently finished his heartworm treatment and has been fully cleared by the vet. He's healthy, happy, and ready to find his forever home!

According to his foster mom, Luke is incredibly mellow, sweet, and loving. He's the kind of dog who melts hearts with his calm presence and gentle nature. He loves when company comes over and greets everyone like an old friend. Smart and intuitive, Luke comes when called and seems to always know what you need whether it's a quiet cuddle or a goofy grin to brighten your day.

Pumpkin Painting

Put on your best costume and join us on this Sunday from noon to 2pm for a festive fall afternoon at Al-Van Humane Society! Our Pumpkin Painting event is fun for all ages; with everything you need to create your own spooky or silly masterpiece. While you're here, snap a photo in our Halloween-themed photo booth, enjoy some treats, and visit some of our adoptable pets for a little extra furry fun.

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST
medium and large latex gloves and paper towels

Exceptional Orthopedic Care

Our orthopedic and sports medicine team has extensive experience treating bone and joint conditions. From hand/wrist, ankle/foot and spine surgery to hip and knee replacement, we're focused on achieving superior clinical outcomes for patients in Van Buren County. We partner with our patients every step of the way and offer same day appointments to make it easier to get a new problem assessed quickly. As the region's leader in orthopedics, exceptional care comes naturally to us. It's in our bones.

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BRONSON

Association takes opposing stance to ranked choice

SWMI clerks cite voter confusion, delays in resolution

By LAUREN RICE
For the Tribune

The Michigan Association of County Clerks voted unanimously this month to oppose a ballot measure intended to introduce ranked-choice voting to Michigan ballots.

The ballot initiative is from the organization Rank MI Vote, which is in the process of collecting enough signatures to be on the November 2026 ballot.

"Michigan's county clerks have collectively dedicated their lives to public service and the pursuit of delivering safe, secure and efficient elections for our residents," MACC President Linda Talsma said in a news release. "As an organization, we rarely take positions on ballot questions, but we felt compelled in this case to urge voters to oppose this measure."

Van Buren County Clerk Suzie Roehm said it's significant for the association to pass a resolution like this, because it doesn't happen often.

"Very, very rarely does our association either support or oppose any kind of a measure," she said. "It's a very rare thing that we do, but we as an association felt very strongly about this, which is why we felt that it was necessary for us to pass that resolution. ... I've been clerk for nine years and it's the only one I can think of, right now, that we've passed as a resolution."

The resolution highlights several concerns, including the length of the ballot; conflicts with provisions of existing state law and the state Constitution; increased voter confusion; complexity and timing of audits and recounts; as well as delays in providing election results to the public.

Cass County Clerk Register Monica McMichael said voter confusion is already a challenge. In August primary elections, she said extra ballots are ordered in preparation for people who spoil their ballots by cross-voting.

"I can tell you I've worked elections for 20 years and I'm sure it would be no surprise to most people that people in general just don't take time to read directions," she said. "And that is one of the biggest issues we have with elections now, not even adding ranked choice voting."

The other significant concern for McMichael, she said, is the "inevitable" delays in providing results after elections to accommodate additional processing involved with RCV.

"This day and age we're under constant scrutiny," she said. "I can tell you, if I have a precinct that doesn't report with the other ones, maybe there's an issue and they can't get me results until 2 a.m., everybody thinks something's going on – whether or not there is. And they immediately jump to conclusion. They want results at 8:05 (p.m.), when polls close at 8 p.m. It would take quite a while to filter through this process."

However, Rank MI Vote Campaign Director Joe Spaulding appealed to the issue of voter turnout and limited candidate options on election day as a more significant concern.

"Doing nothing while our Democracy is falling apart can have unintended consequences too," he said. "Ranked Choice Voting increases turnout because it gives voters more choice and more voice. They stay home on Election Day because they don't like their choices, not because their arm gets tired when they are filling out a ballot."

Ranked choice, also referred to as instant-runoff voting, is a different way of voting. In a ranked choice election, a voter will rank the candidates in order of preference, rather than selecting one intended winner.

The instant runoff happens if there is no candidate who wins the majority, more than 50 percent, of the votes. In that scenario, the candidate who came in last place would be eliminated from the running and those ballots then count for the voter's second choice. The process is repeated until there is a candidate with more than half of the votes.

In addition to this resolution and the ongoing effort of Rank MI Vote, there is legislation also active in the Michigan Legislature.

House Bill 4707 is intended to preemptively ban ranked choice voting, and was already approved by House Republicans. It is currently in the state Senate, awaiting action after being delegated to the Senate Committee on Elections and Ethics.

Ranked choice voting has already been implemented in several locations around the country, and banned in others.

According to BallotPedia, 17 states have banned ranked choice voting altogether since 2022. The most recent states to do so are Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming in 2025.

All but two of the 17 states passed their bans with a Republican trifecta in control of the state government.

Three states – Alaska, Hawaii and Maine – use ranked choice voting statewide, and 14 states are in the same position as Michigan with localities scheduling the use of RCV in advance of state action. That leaves 16 states with no laws yet addressing ranked choice voting.

Contact: lrice@TheHP.com, 932-0360

Photo provided

South Haven Indivisible hosted the No Kings 2 protest and raised $624 for First Congregational Church UCC's food pantry.

South Haven Indivisible raise $624 for local food pantry

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Indivisible recently raised $624 for the First Congregation Church UCC food pantry during the No Kings 2 protest.

According to a news release, volunteers collected the money as they walked through the crowd of 2,000 people who gathered on both sides of Phoenix Road in South Haven.

"The rally portion of the No Kings 2 protest, organized by South Haven Indivisible featured Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel who spoke about the devastating effect that budget cuts to Medicaid and other federal programs will have on Michigan," The release stated.

Those affected include the moderator Blanca Hinojosa's son Rio who participated in the rally.

South Haven Indivisible founder Mary Jackson said in the release that it is important being on the front lines of protecting democracy and "stopping the Hitler Nazi style playbook that is happening in the United States."

"We are united against kings in this country," Jackson said in the release.

The First Congregation Church UCC Food Pantry serves people living in Bangor, Bloomingdale, Breedsville, Covert, Grand Junction, Lacota, South Haven and Glenn.

The pantry is open from 10 a.m. to noon on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 651 Phoenix St., South Haven, MI.

MASTERS
Chiropractic

Photo provided

Masters Chiropractic and Rehabilitation recently celebrated moving to a new location in South Haven with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Masters Chiropractic celebrates new location in SH

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Masters Chiropractic and Rehabilitation recently celebrated moving to a new location in South Haven.

According to a news release, the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at the new location at 08337 M-140 suite 5, South Haven.

Dr. Masters first purchased the practice in August 2015 after returning to Michigan from Grand Rapids in search of a lakeshore community to serve.

"Having grown up in Battle Creek and visiting South Haven often as a child, he knew this community would be the perfect fit," the release stated. "Since then, he has become deeply involved in South Haven – supporting local schools and sports teams, serving as a Chamber Ambassador, joining the Moose Lodge board and volunteering at events like the National Blueberry Festival."

Masters Chiropractic and Rehabilitation offers chiropractic care for all ages, massage therapy and spinal decompression. Their focus extends beyond spinal health to whole-body wellness, providing treatment for shoulder, wrist, knee and ankle pain.

The new space allows the practice to better serve the community with expanded capacity and more walk-in availability.

"The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce congratulates Masters Chiropractic and Rehabilitation on this exciting milestone and thanks them for their continued investment in the South Haven community," the release stated.

To learn more about Masters Chiropractic and Rehabilitation go to southhavenchiropractor.com.

Silence should not be an option.

Together, we keep this town alive.

Every shop, café, and local service in South Haven thrives on one simple truth: when visitors come, our community grows stronger.

Short-term rentals aren't just a place to stay — they're part of the local economy's lifeline. Every family who rents a home shops downtown, eats at our restaurants, tips our servers, and fills our gas pumps. That spending supports nearly 6% of our local jobs and adds up to over $35 million a year in visitor spending.

When policies threaten short-term rentals, they threaten more than property owners — they threaten paychecks, opportunity, and the year-round rhythm of South Haven itself.

**This isn't about politics. It's about people.
It's about protecting the vibrancy that fuels our businesses and the hospitality that defines our town.**

**So let's speak up — not out of fear, but out of love for what we've built together.
Let's make sure the lights stay on, the doors stay open, and the spirit of South Haven keeps shining.**

Support candidates who believe in tourism, hospitality, growing the middle class and property rights that work for everyone.

Because when South Haven thrives, we all do.

Scan the QR Code to the right and read the FACTS for yourself about STRs in SoHa.

The City's own study explicitly states that STRs "have positive economic impacts on area businesses", especially those tied to tourism and hospitality." - Can you really afford to lose that income?

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
Allegan COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

ESTATE OF:
Christian Tandrup Knudsen
Date of birth: 8/24/1937
Sharon Kay Knudsen
Date of birth: 4/13/1937

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedents, Sharon Kay Knudsen, died 05/20/2025 and Christian Tandrup Knudsen, died 08/22/2025. Creditors of the decedents are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Chris Frederick Knudsen, personal representative, within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 10/17/2025

Chris Frederick Knudsen
Personal representative
7437 Figura Drive
Address
Justice, IL 60458
City, state, zip
(708)623-9731
Telephone

PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICES
To place a public notice, please send your requests to **legals@pmginmi.com.**

Please allow 48 hours to process, larger legals may need at least four business days.

NEWS
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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Van Buren COUNTY

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF HEARING

FILE NO.
2025 1168 DE

IN THE MATTER OF:
Judith Ann Thar

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including: James Gumpert, Jeff Harris, Duane Stainbrook, Tonya Stainbrook, Teresa Merritt, Tiffany Metty, Tohisha Gustfson, Jeremy Dark, Chad Dark and Cody Dark **whose address(es) is/are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:**

TAKE NOTICE: A hearing will be held on November 6, 2025, at 11:00 AM at 212 E paw Paw St., Paw Paw MI 49079 before Judge Susan Metzger P62867 for the following purpose:

Petition for Probate and/or Appointment of Personal Representative

You may use ZOOM to appear in Virtual Room 3 using Meeting ID 277 444 5820. If you have any technical questions, please contact the court by calling or e-mailing us at: 269-567-8225 or probate@vanburencountymi.gov

Date 10/20/2025

Staci L. Salisbury P79632
Attorney name Bar no.
9848 Portage Road
Address
Portage, MI 49002
City, state, zip
269-256-5960
Telephone

Lori S. Harris
Personal representative
44261 CR 390
Address
Bloomingdale, MI 49026
City, state, zip
269-330-4137
Telephone

Meeting Synopsis
Casco Township Board Meeting
Monday, October 20th, 2025
CALL TO ORDER: -Overhiser called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and led in The Pledge of Allegiance.
PRESENT: -Overhiser, Clevenger, Ridley, Campbell & Fleming.
ITEMS APPROVED: -PA 116 Application for Dykhuis
ADJOURNMENT: -Allegan County Eagle View Proposal
Allan Overhiser, Casco Supervisor
Rachel Ridley, Casco Clerk

RESERVE THIS SPACE TODAY!

NOTICE OF PUBLIC ACCURACY TEST COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Notice is hereby given that the Public Accuracy Test of the electronic voting equipment to be used in the November 4, 2025, Consolidated Election for Columbia Township, Van Buren County, Michigan, will be conducted on:

Tuesday, October 29, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.
Columbia Township Hall
53053 CR 388, Grand Junction, MI 49056

The Public Accuracy Test is conducted to demonstrate that the program and computer used to record and count the votes cast at the election meet the requirements of Michigan election law.

This test is open to the public.

The Columbia Township Hall is accessible to persons with disabilities. Persons with special needs as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act are encouraged to contact the Clerk's Office well in advance to arrange reasonable accommodations.

For additional information, please contact:
Kara Hartmann Laraway, Clerk Columbia Twp -Van Buren County
53053 CR 388, Grand Junction, MI 49056
clerk@columbiatwp.com (269) 434-6227
*** Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9:00am.-1:00pm. (by appointment)**
*** Special Election Weekend Hours: Sun, Nov. 2, 8:00am.-4:00pm.**

NOTICE OF ELECTION TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Notice is hereby given that a Consolidated Election will be held on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, in Columbia Township, Van Buren County, Michigan. **The polls will be open from 7:00 am. to 8:00 pm.** The election is being held to vote on the following proposal as it appears on the ballot:

PROPOSAL SECTION
District Library
Van Buren District Library Millage Renewal

Shall the Van Buren District Library, County of Van Buren, be authorized to levy a millage annually in an amount not to exceed .1984 mill ($0.1984 per $1,000 of taxable value), which is a renewal of the millage rate last levied in 2024, against all taxable property within the Van Buren District Library district for a period of ten (10) years, 2025 through 2034 inclusive, for the purpose of providing funds for all district library purposes authorized by law?

The estimate of the revenue the Van Buren District Library will collect if the millage is approved and levied in the first year (2025) is approximately $484,000. To the extent required by law, a portion of the revenues from this millage will be captured within the district and disbursed to the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of Van Buren County. Pursuant to Funding and Reciprocal Borrowing Agreements, 75% of the millage revenues received from Porter Township will be disbursed to the Village of Lawton Public Library and 10% of the millage revenues received from Bangor Township will be disbursed to the Hartford Public Library.

The polling location for all voters in Columbia Township is:
Columbia Township Hall
53053 CR 388, Grand Junction, MI 49056

* Accessible entrance and voting equipment available.
* Absentee ballots are available to all registered voters at the Clerk's Office during regular hours or by mail.
* Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (by appointment)
* Special Election Weekend Hours: Sunday, November 2, 2025, 8:00a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.columbiatwp.com or contact:
Kara Hartmann Laraway, Clerk Columbia Twp -Van Buren County
53053 CR 388, Grand Junction, MI 49056
clerk@columbiatwp.com (269) 434-6227

Covert Township Board Meeting
January 14, 2025
Covert Township Hall 6:00pm
Meeting Synopsis
Meeting called to order at 6pm
Present: Pritchard, Cook, Rose, Rendell, Taylor
Update from Commissioner Askew from VBC Road Commission
Motions approved:
*The agenda with revisions
*Consent agenda
*Quote from Compton to disconnect the water from the Old DPW building
*Quote from Fleetwood's to replace the furnace at the Township Hall
*Quote from WMOI to replace three chairs at the Covert Police Department
*The purchase of 5 new pagers for the Covert Fire Department
*Costs related to sending Fire fighter Ferrell to the SMEMSIC conference
*Costs to clean and pump the west septic tank at the municipal septic field
*Adoption of the 2025 Poverty Exemption Guidelines and Asset Test Resolution
*Purchasing rope for Covert Park Beach and Campground
*To re-appoint L. Taylor to the Planning Commission as Board Liaison (4-year term)
*To re-appoint M. Rendell as board liaison on Senior Advisory Committee (4-year term)
*To re-appoint D. Cook as board liaison on Community Garden Advisory Committee and the Historical Museum Advisory Committee (both 4-year terms).
*To re-appoint W. Rendell and E. Wilborn for 2-year terms on Park Advisory Committee
*To accept the resignation of P. Jackson from the Covert Historical Museum Advisory Committee and the Covert Housing Commission
*To appoint V. Bury to the Covert Historical Museum Advisory Committee
*To appoint D. Simpson to the Covert Housing Commission
*To appoint V. Vaitkus to the Zoning Board of Appeals
*To accept the resignation of D. Rice from Zoning Board of Appeals
*To appoint Chief Allen to the South Haven Area Regional Airport Authority
*To accept the resignation of R. Christy from the South Haven Area Regional
Public comments offered by Liz Smaka and Barbara Norman
Next regular Township Board Meeting is scheduled to be held Tuesday February 11, 2025, at 6pm, Covert Township Hall, 73943 Lake Street.

CASCO TOWNSHIP, ALLEGAN COUNTY NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Zoning Board of Appeals of Casco Township will conduct a public hearing and regular meeting on Thursday November 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. at the Casco Township Hall, 7104 107th Ave, South Haven, MI 49090, within the Township.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the item to be considered at said public hearing include the following:

Mike and Karen Tracy have petitioned for a variance to add two additions on the north side of the house and construct a detached garage at 920 Adams 0302-150-009-00. Additions: Required side setback is 10 feet; request is for 6.2 feet of relief (to be 3.8ft from property line) Detached garage: Required front setback is 25ft; request 5ft of relief (to be 20ft from front property line); required side setback is 10ft; request 6.2 ft of relief (to be 3.8ft from property line)

Jeffery and Anita Cassetta have petitioned for a variance to construct a garage addition at 7439 Eaton Dr 0302-450-031-00. Required front setback is 25ft; request is for 9ft of relief (to be 16ft from front property line).

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the application packet can be reviewed at the Casco Township Hall during regular business hours at 7104 107th Ave, South Haven or by contacting the Zoning Administrator for an electronic copy 1-800-626-5964 mtsallegan@frontier.com

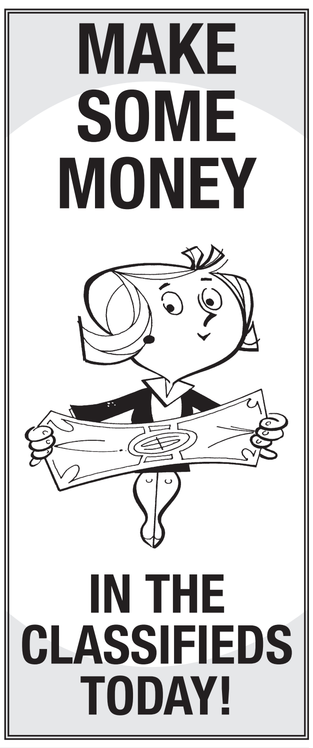
PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that written comments may be submitted to the Township Clerk at the Township Hall, by mail, to address below, or email to the zoning administrator mtsallegan@frontier.com. All written comments must be submitted no later than 5:00pm the day preceding the public hearing (Wed November 12th, 5pm).

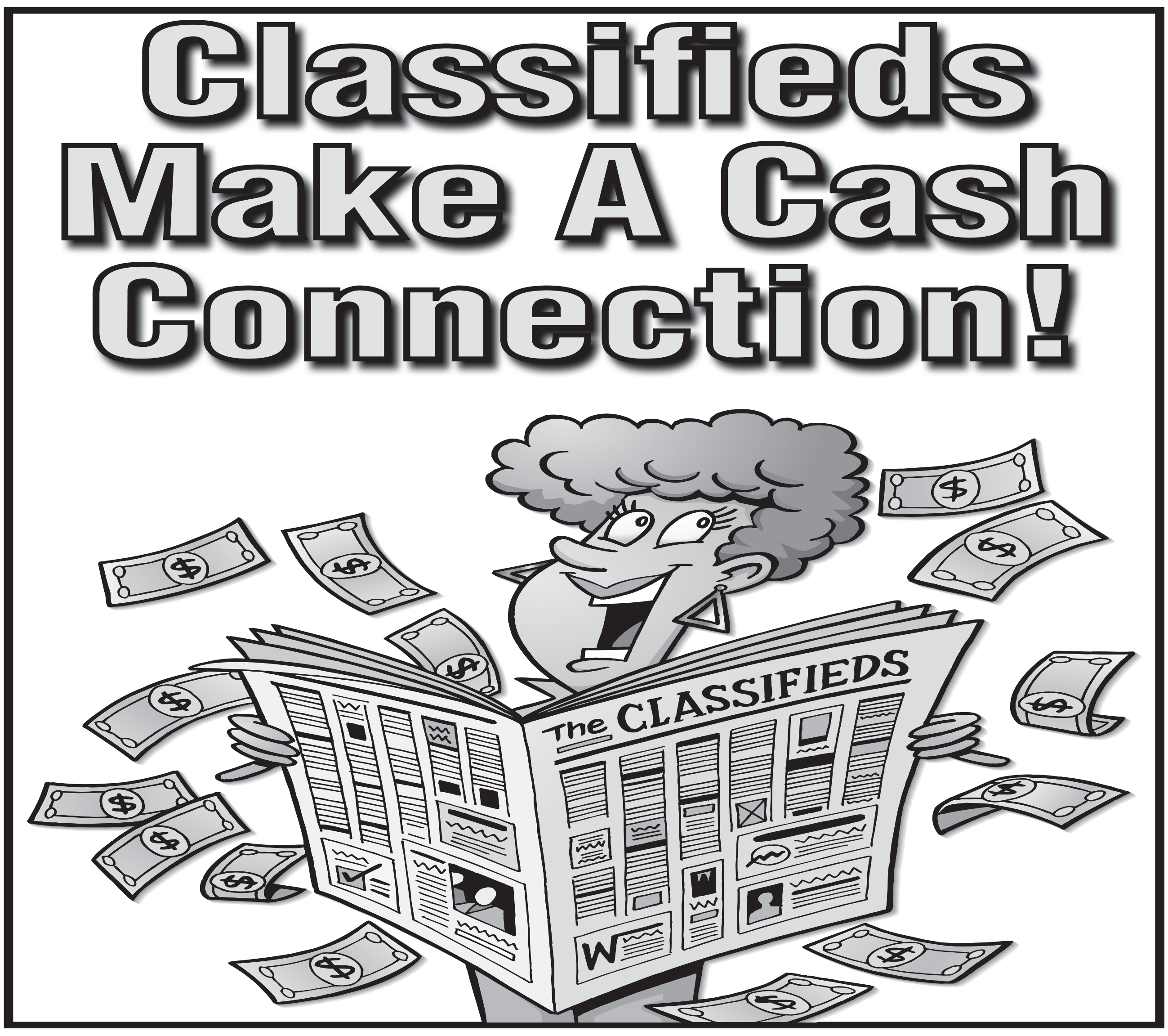
Casco Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities at the hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to the Casco Township Clerk.

Rachel Ridley
Casco Township Clerk
7104 107th Ave, South Haven MI 49090
269-637-4441

Tasha Smalley
Zoning Administrator
1-800-626-5964

SHOUT IT!
OUT LOUD!
IN THE CLASSIFIEDS!




Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!
The CLASSIFIEDS

Riverwoods site secured for long-term recreational use

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Recreation Authority recently announced the official acquisition of the 50-acre Riverwoods property.

According to a news release, with the sale now finalized, the recreation authority will move forward with plans to develop the land into a new public recreation space for the South Haven community.

"This is a huge moment for the South Haven area," South Haven Area Recreation Authority Board Chair Ross Stein said in the release. "We've taken a site with a complex past and secured its future as a recreational space for the community – permanently."

Originally acquired by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in 2012, the Riverwoods site, located in South Haven Township along the Black River and Kal-Haven Trail, has a varied history including use as a peach orchard and an unfinished residential development.

"SHARA began working with the DNR in 2023 to acquire the land under the state's Land Exchange and Sale program – a process requiring extensive coordination and a formal commitment to long-term public use," the release stated. "SHARA acquired the property at just 25 percent of its fair market value, reflecting both the public purpose of the project and strong collaboration between local and state partners."

As part of the agreement, the property will continue to be permanently deed-restricted for outdoor recreation, ensuring it will never be used for commercial development or other non-recreational purposes.

Photo provided / Tom Renner

The South Haven Area Recreation Authority recently took ownership of the 50-acre Riverwoods property with plans to develop it into a public recreation space.

"Initial site planning and preparation are already underway," the release stated.

Future phases will focus on expanding public access and amenities while preserving the site's natural features.

"One anticipated highlight includes the relocation of a portion of the historic Nichols Covered Bridge, which will be installed as a centerpiece of the park's trail system," the release stated.

A section of the bridge was preserved through the efforts of Visit South Haven, which has also committed to financing its relocation to Riverwoods and to matching funds for a grant to replace the fishing pier, relocate the pavilion and add a kayak launch to the site.

"Initial financial support for the Riverwoods project has come from the Department of Natural Resources, SHARA, and Visit South Haven," Stein said in the release. "That funding will help us begin site work and additional fundraising is underway to support key features in the first phase of development."

The Riverwoods project also advances priorities identified in the South Haven Parks and Recreation Master Plan, offering an opportunity to expand recreational access and develop key amenities that community members have voiced support for.

"The groundwork is laid and momentum is building," Executive Director of Visit South Haven Jennifer Sistrunk said in the release. "We've built strong community support and engaged passionate local advocates who are already fundraising for key features. This is a win for our residents, for outdoor recreation and for long-term placemaking in the South Haven area."

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources facilitated the transfer of the site.

"The Riverwoods project is a great example of what happens when local and state partners come together with a shared vision for outdoor access," Michigan Department of Natural Resources Chief Kristen Kosick said in the release.

The department has also committed $200,000 in grant funding to help kick off development at the site.

"We're proud to support SHARA and the South Haven community in creating a space that will benefit generations to come," Kosick said in the release.

Pastor Steve Starks retires after 26 years in SH

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — After serving for 26 years at First Church of God of South Haven, Paster Steve Starks and his wife, Nancy, will step away from leading the church.

According to a news release, the church celebrated Pastor Starks' "reassignment" on Sunday where South Haven Mayor Brown presented him with a plaque.

"Since the Bible doesn't speak of retirement and because we know God isn't finished with them yet, we will wish them a blessed reassignment," the release stated.

The church's history dates back to 1886 and was first recognized in the South Haven newspaper as the Church of God in 1924.

"Pastor Steve will have served over 25 percent of our formal years of existence," the release stated.

Prior to entering the ministry, he was employed at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans from 1967 to 1997, serving in a number of positions including the kitchen and supervisor of the grounds crew. He participated in the three-year Spiritual Leadership Initiative offered by the Church of God in Anderson, Ind. from 1993 to 1996.

"In 1997, Steve provided his doctrinal statement to the credentials committee," the release stated. "Steve's relationship with First Church of God of South Haven began in 1999, as an interim pastor."

Pastor Starks was ordained in April 2000 and in 2001, he was named the full-time pastor of the church.

During his time with the church, he participated in four international and three homeland mission trips with 11 other members of the congregation.

LMC gets feedback on Flowers as presidential candidate

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
For the Tribune

BENTON TOWNSHIP — For Ken Flowers, the prospect of becoming Lake Michigan College's next president isn't a logical step on the career ladder, but a chance to positively impact the institution that's defined his life for 40 years.

That opportunity will come through a vision that Flowers describes as "student-centric," with an emphasis on community impact, and being "action-oriented."

"I started here 40 years ago – my family's here, my wife went here, I went here. I believe in Lake Michigan College, and that is my vision, too," Flowers said. "Our vision is that student who sits down in front of you. That's your vision, making sure whatever they need will be there for them – and then, we just expand that into the community, and beyond."

Flowers's comments came at an Oct. 16 community forum at the Todd Center, on LMC's main campus in Benton Township. About a dozen people attended.

The forum was intended to get feedback on desired qualities for LMC's next president. Current president Trevor Kubatzke plans to retire by Dec. 31, 2026, having led the college since 2017.

So far, Flowers is the only declared candidate for the position. He spent a full day meeting with other key constituencies, including employees, faculty members and students, as well as the President's Cabinet.

The Pauly Group, of Springfield, Ill., is helping the college with its search – which meant President Angela Provart was also on hand, to answer questions, and pass out feedback forums for the participants to fill out.

All about accountability

Flowers is currently serving as an executive vice president, and has held many key roles since he started at LMC in 1997, as a part-time machining and manufacturing instructor.

Some of his other major positions have included dean of Career and Workforce Education, director of Workforce Training and Development, Technology Department chairman, and as an apprenticeship coordinator.

"Our staff really wants people to be accountable, because that's part of culture, too," Flowers said. "If I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing, it just leads for failure. It's not just listening, but do what you say you're going to do, Follow up on what you're doing."

Questions ranged from LMC's successes, to how Flowers stays "plugged in" with the community, and what major challenges he sees ahead.

Thad Rieder, director of business development for Pearson Construction, raised the latter issue, asking Flowers to name three or four examples – and how he would handle them.

Two are financial ones, Flowers noted, starting with the work of passing LMC's 20-year, 0.665-mill operating millage renewal – and 0.5 percent rollback of its capital millage, from 0.48 to 0.24 mills. Failing to pass the operating millage on Nov. 4 would mean major cutbacks and hardships for the college – on top of the turmoil that's happening nationally, Flowers noted.

For example, LMC receives about $200,000 per year in federal Perkins funding – which could wind up re-routed to K-12 districts, under one proposal making the rounds in Washington, he said.

"That could be going away," Flowers said. "You never know when our current state of government's going to change something. We just have to make sure that we stay even-keeled, and plan for it."

Flowers cited enrollment as the third example in his response.

Community colleges nationwide have been seeing enrollment declines, which is why LMC has is developing an early college advisory committee, – to refine its efforts in attracting local high school students, Flowers said.

"Forty of 100 students that graduate from high school don't go anywhere right now, so we have that data. Part of my vision is, when students graduate, we want students to think of LMC first. But we also want schools to be thinking about us, as well, not just when that counselor shows up," he said.

The presidential interview

Flowers touched on many of those same themes at Wednesday's special meeting, where the board interviewed him.

If chosen, Flowers expects to be "more of an external person, than internal."

That means advocating publicly for LMC – from finding dollars for new programs, to working on new partnerships, and "meeting with companies that we haven't met before," Flowers said.

The interview wrapped up in about an hour, with Flowers also getting to ask questions of his own – such as what the board considered signs of a strong working relationship.

The board will decide by next month if it will offer the job to Flowers, or open up the search to other candidates, said LMC Board Vice Chair Vicki Burghdoff, and Trustee John Grover, who attended Thursday's sessions.

"The board needs to get the feedback from the survey, and process that – most of the board had an opportunity to see Ken in action tonight," Grover said. "That's valuable, because we don't see him, day to day. So that was a fantastic opportunity for us. He was able to take his presentation, and tailor it (to the different groups)."

Grover voiced satisfaction with Thursday's sessions, with turnouts ranging from seven, for the cabinet; about a dozen, for the students; 30 apiece, for two different faculty sessions; and roughly 70, for the staff session, he said.

"We had really good turnout, especially for staff – they asked some really good questions. We had questions on everything from housing to athletics," he said,

Asked if he feels the board has enough information to make a decision, Grover responded, "We're still happy to move forward. We've not heard anything, from anybody today, that has made us question whether he is a viable candidate."

SOUTH HAVEN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Photo provided

Naturally Holistic Health was recently welcomed as a new member of the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Naturally Holistic Health offers personalized wellness

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed Naturally Holistic Health as a new member with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

According to a news release, Naturally Holistic Health is led by Certified Holistic Health Practitioner and Health Coach Jordan Jones.

Naturally Holistic Health offers a whole-body, personalized approach to wellness for adults and children in South Haven and the surrounding area.

Jones, a South Haven native, began seeing clients in January 2025 in St. Joseph and expanded to South Haven shortly after with the support of Dr. Vassar at Vassar's Chiropractic and Rehabilitation.

"My goal is to help you restore balance within naturally," Jones said in the release. "Bringing in the good and expelling the bad will help us achieve this. I work closely with each client to identify stress within. Supporting weaknesses, correcting mineral deficiencies and recommending lifestyle adjustments to support your overall health."

Services at Naturally Holistic Health include thorough lifestyle assessments, in-office REAMS testing and HTMA testing, which provide insight into gut health, mineral levels, adrenal and thyroid function, heavy metal toxicity and overall body system balance.

"Jordan develops individualized Holistic Health Guides with recommendations including herbs, supplements, lifestyle modifications, detoxifications and alternative therapies tailored to each client's needs," the release stated.

In addition to clinical services, Jones created two homeschool curriculums for ages 6 to 15 designed to teach children about essential nutrients, body systems, toxins and foundational health practices.

The workbooks encourage children to explore holistic health as a career path and include a children's detox protocol.

"The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to welcome Naturally Holistic Health and looks forward to supporting Jordan in promoting wellness and balance throughout the community," the release stated.

For more information or to schedule an appointment go to naturallyholistic.health.

Lest We Forget Patriotic Concert
"On Wings Like Eagles"
FREE
Mendel Center Jenkins Theater
Sunday - Nov 9, 2:00 p.m.
Southshore Concert Band Patriotic Tribute
Master of Ceremonies: Jeff Whitaker
Mendel Center
Veterans Stories – Books
Free Veteran Photos
1-1:45
Lake Michigan College
2555 E. Napier Ave
Benton Harbor, MI 49022
Lest We Forget REMEMBERS
Donations Appreciated
FREE
Open to the Public
Call for info:
269-429-2098

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SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Photo provided / Tom Renner

South Haven swimmer Sofia Grieves wins the 100 Butterfly in a meet against Plainwell Public School.

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "Altered Consumerism" exhibition from Aug. 8 through Sept. 20.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays.

South Haven Farm Market: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. through October at Huron Street Pavilion.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lake Arvesta: Summer at the pasture concert every Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: New Exhibit – "The Adventures of Liberty Hyde Bailey – Chicago: 1872." Available during museum hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: "The Gift of Mnoomin" by Brittany Luby and Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley Storywalk. Available from Oct. 1 through 31.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge – Chicago Scoring: noon on Tuesdays. Lakeside Entertainment, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

Bridge – Duplicate Scoring: 1 pm on Wednesdays. Lakeside Entertainment, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "The Ghost that Linger" art exhibition available through Nov. 8.

South Haven Memorial Library: Autumn Painting Contest from Oct. 20 to Nov. 10. Participants can pick up a mini canvas from the library and paint, sketch or color something for fall or Thanksgiving related, featuring either books or the library. Painting need to be dropped of by Nov. 10. The pubic can vote on the painting from Nov. 17 to 24.

October

26 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Pumpkin Boo-Walk starting at 6:45 p.m.

26 – Al-Van Humane Society: Pumpkin Painting from noon to 2 p.m.

26 – Cranes Orchards: Halloween in the Orchard from 4:30 to 6 p.m.

28 – South Haven Young Professionals: Coffee Connections from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. at The Flying Saucer.

28 – Rotary Club: Club Assembly and Rotary President Amy Nichols to present.

29 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

30 – South Haven Tri-M Music Honor Society: Halloween Carnival rom 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the South Haven High School gym.

30 – First Baptist Church: Pumpkinfest from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the gym. Free event with games, activities and candy.

30 – New Holland Distilling: Spooks and Spells cocktails class from 6 to 8 p.m.

30 – Douglas Cove: Sweet Smile and Spooky Styles from 5 to 7 p.m.

31 – Goody's Wash N' Go: Trunk or Treat from 4 to 6 p.m.

31 – South Haven Nursing and Rehab: Community Trick-or-Treat from 5 to 7 p.m.

31 – Laurel Oaks: Boo-tiful Night trunk-or-treat from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

31 – Daydreamer Domes: Welcome to the Circus from 8 to 11 p.m.

31 – Trick-or-Treat: City wide trick-or-treating from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

PROJECTS

From page A1

have to kind of see what that would cause, because we are looking at options for walls (and) we're looking at options for slow increasing the slopes there. (The) curb is really needed along sloped roads to help control the drainage."

Evaluating roads

City council approved engineering services for the updating of the Street Pavement Surface Evaluation and Ratings and updating of the Street Asset Management Plan with OHM in the amount of $57,500.

"We're requesting again to work with an engineering consultant who can help us evaluate our comprehensive road needs as well," Burd said. "We've had an active capital improvement plan for the city. It's been a good plan, it served us well, but with the upcoming millage discussion happening in 2027, we know that we want to go back to our last comprehensive plan and see how we did."

The city's current local street millage is set to expire in 2027 and is planning to be put back on the ballot in late 2026 or early 2027.

In 2017, a Street Asset Management Plan and updating of the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating was completed by Abonmarche. Since then, the ratings have typically been completed by the Van Buren County Road Commission each year.

"We evaluate the road network based on kind of the underlying cross-section of the road, and then we look at the surface condition of the road," Burd said. "We have a lot of data that we've loaded into a database called road soft that has the cross sections ... and then we evaluate the surface every few years with this PASER rating system, and it's a common metric where you evaluate and give the road a numerical score."

This evaluation will help city staff forecast investment needed on the street network for various levels of service and condition standards. Revenue projections will be made that account for state funding, county millage and local street millage scenarios, Burd said.

"So, this process that we're looking at now with an asset management plan will update those surface conditions, but it'll also look back on all the cross-sectional data we have in that software," Burd said.

City council approved the Underground Cable and Equipment Contract for the Huron Street Electric Underground Conversion project to CC Power in the amount of $252,802 and approved the purchase of electric materials from Power Line Supply and Irby in the amount of $127,809.09.

"This is the final piece of all the work that's going on, on Huron Street, between the grant that we got from the small urban project to help support the road reconstruction, the DDA has contributed funds for sidewalk and street lighting," Burd said. "In a prior meeting, I think a month ago, council approved the conduit installation contract and so, this final contract and equipment purchase is, once all the conduit is in the ground, another contractor comes in and takes all the overhead lines and puts it into that conduit."

Burd said the conduit has been installed in the ground and the road is scheduled to be paved by Nov. 15. Work will then begin to move the cables, wires and equipment into those conduits and Burd said the work could lag into spring.

Other items

The council held a discussion regarding the definition of conflict of interest.

This discussion was requested by Council Members Hosley and Latitia Wilkins out of concern of being excluded from voting on items in the future related to the Overton site and Baseline Road – due to the council members' residence being in close proximity to both areas.

"At the planning commission meeting, there was a change to the bylaws with regard to conflict of interest, and this really all started from the zoning rewrite, where conflict of interest was removed as a definition and the Michigan Planning Enabling Act actually allows the legislative body by ordinance to define conflict of interest," Hosley said.

City Attorney Dave Eberly said the bylaws of the planning commission do not apply to city council.

"We have a charter that shows exactly what our conflict of interest is, that applies to this body," Hosier said. "And right now, there's nothing in there that would prohibit anyone from voting on 120 Baseline or the Overton."

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

The Spotlight

A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

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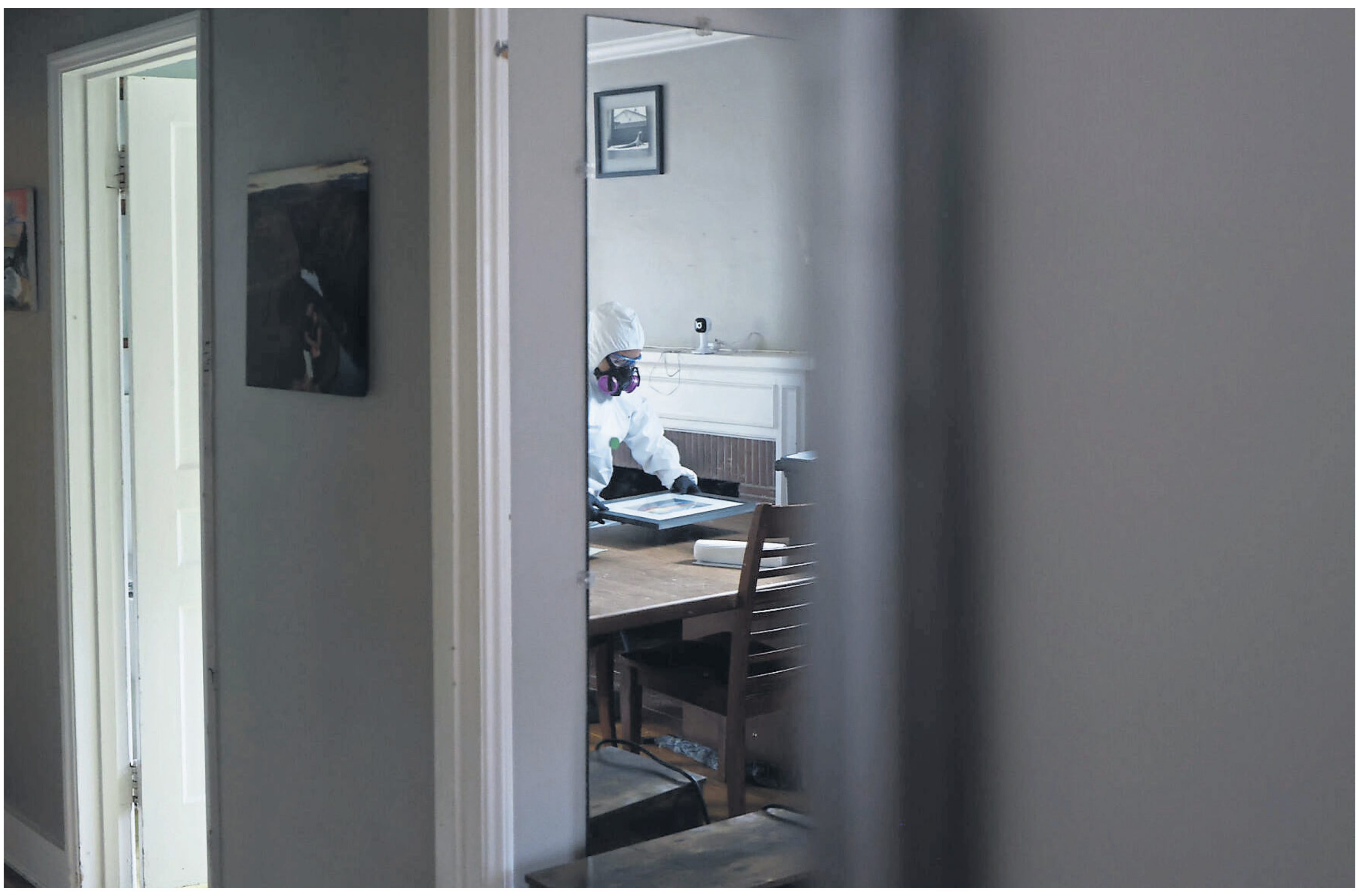
FOCUS

Workers clean up contaminated possessions and surfaces months after the Eaton Fire at Brent Morgan and Corine Harmon's home on Oct. 3 in Altadena, California.

Photos by Carlin Stiehl / Los Angeles Times / TNS

In the fire zones, an immigrant workforce carries out cleanups

By COLLEEN SHALBY
Los Angeles Times (TNS)



A worker cleans up contaminated possessions and surfaces months after the Eaton Fire at Brent Morgan and Corine Harmon's home on Oct. 3 in Altadena, California.

Ricardo Melo, a disaster site worker who is overseeing more than 100 cleanups in Altadena, stands in the back yard of Brent Morgan and Corine Harmon's home on Friday in Altadena, California.

LOS ANGELES — Ash still clings to the windowsills of the gray home in Altadena, nine months after an inferno ripped the community apart.

The couple who rents the house has moved 15 times with their newborn since January as their place of solace for the last decade has awaited testing and remediation to clear it of toxic material and debris.

Help has finally arrived. Wearing white hazmat suits that cover them from head to toe, gloves, respirator masks and goggles, a group of workers enters the residence.

When the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed its debris removal in Altadena after January's fire tore through the town, the task to clean what survived didn't stop. Hundreds of smoke-damaged and ash-filled homes remained standing on streets where others burned.

These efforts to clean them have largely been carried out by immigrant workers who have not just risked their health while clearing homes of toxic material and debris but, with ongoing raids, the lives they have built in California.

They meticulously vacuum, and scrub the walls, windows, baseboards and floors, clearing every open surface and precious possession of reminders of the Eaton fire.

Ricardo Melo has overseen more than 100 cleanups in Altadena and 25 in Pacific Palisades. He works for the National Day Laborer Organizing Network and said those he supervises have emigrated from Mexico, Central America and South America. Despite fears of deportation, his teams have continued to show up.

Melo's approach to the cleanup is two-pronged: The first is ensuring that the workers understand who lived here before the fire – in this case a family with a baby – so that they will work diligently and with compassion. There's no music on during the process – he wants the teams to concentrate.

The second is to make sure that his teams follow protocols to protect their own lives. A report from NDLON earlier this year found that many workers under contract with the Army Corps were not abiding by safety standards. Melo said he takes measures to prevent workers from absorbing or inhaling toxic chemicals.

"Every day, I remove all the bags and the filters from equipment because I don't want to take contamination from one house to another house. I check every part of my equipment so that it's good for the families and for the workers too," Melo said. "Who's going to clean up what's inside their bodies?"

Two women, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of being targeted by immigration enforcement, started doing remediation work after the fires burned homes in Altadena they had previously cleaned as housekeepers. They said that they feel safer working inside homes, where they're shielded, than they do when they're exposed outside or in transit.

The 34- and 49-year-old women have cleared dozens of homes in Altadena from debris and ash left by the Eaton fire. Although the work they are doing presents certain risks due to exposure to unknown toxic materials, they said that the threat of encounters with ICE causes greater panic.

"The exposure to the contaminants from the fire is some kind of fear, but it is double the fear that I feel when I think about ICE and what they're doing with the raids," one of the women said in Spanish, speaking through an interpreter. "There's a way to protect us from the contaminants … but with the raids, we have seen that there's not much that we can actually do."

One of the women left Colombia for the U.S. with her husband and children to escape violence. The other left Honduras, one of the most violent countries in the world, in search of a better future. But the reality since the fires in January and then as the raids began this summer, she said, has been bleak.

"I don't know that I believe [the future will get better] anymore. It's been very hard, and the situation is actually getting worse. Nothing has been getting better for us," she said, also speaking through an interpreter.

Outside the home in Altadena, trash bags are filled up with loose papers, textiles and anything from inside the house believed to be unsafe; mattresses, boxes of unused diapers and a new nursing chair that will be discarded line the driveway; a Christmas tree out front serves as a time capsule for what happened here.

Across the street, the burn scar on the mountains is visible.

The workers quietly and carefully tackle each room of the house while the garage has been turned into another cleaning zone where they box salvaged items.

Resident Brent Morgan, 42, is grateful for the help after months of seeking assistance after learning that his rental insurance had expired. Since then, he tried to find help that wouldn't be too costly.

The cleanup process is daunting. His wife, a professional dancer, has multiple costumes that have yet to be cleaned; it's been so long since he's been home that he doesn't remember which photographs still cling to his fridge. The last several months have in many ways been a blur, but it's unclear when normalcy will resume.

"It's definitely been the most challenging time of our life, that's for sure. Having a new baby was hard without all of this on top of it," Morgan said. "We're happy to hopefully move forward. It's just the fact that with the baby being so young, we still just don't know if it's safe to be back. So all we can do is make progress and then do testing after and see if it's clear."

At a nearby church, all-day training sessions are held to teach workers how to prepare for risks on these job sites. Debora Gonzalez, the health and safety director at NDLON, carries out thought exercises with a group of workers, asking them to think through what obstacles they may face – such as fallen branches or gas – and how to assess the safety of an area. They learn to properly put on the protective gear required to go inside these homes in the coming days, helping each other step into their hazmat suits and affixing their masks over their noses and mouths.

Gonzalez has trained hundreds of workers on remediation efforts since January's fires. She has worked with NDLON since 2019 and has helped to restore several communities in the aftermath of tragedy.

The fire that destroyed much of Altadena, she said, is one of the worst disasters she has seen.

"Raids are another disaster for us. And when a disaster happens, you can see what it does."

Majestic wild horses are trampling Mono Lake's otherworldly landscape

The feds plan a roundup

By LILA SEIDMAN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Photos by Jason Armond / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Wild horses graze along the eastern shores of Mono Lake, famed for limestone columns called tufa.

Bartshe Miller, Eastern Sierra policy director for the Mono Lake Committee, looks out onto the landscape at Warm Springs, a remote area on the east side of Mono Lake.

LOS ANGELES — Several dozen horses calmly graze along the shores of Mono Lake, a sparkling saline expanse spread out before the jagged Sierra Nevada mountains. The September sun is blazing. A pair of brown horses come up side by side and stare intensely at an approaching visitor.

These wild equines soon may disappear from beside the ancient lake. The prospect is stirring emotional disagreement over the future of the herd, which has surged to more than three times what federal officials say the land can support.

“These horses deserve a place to roam and be free, but around Mono Lake is not the place,” said Bartshe Miller of the Mono Lake Committee, an environmental nonprofit.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management approved a plan to round up and remove hundreds of wild horses roaming beyond the roughly 200,000 acres designated for them along the California and Nevada border. No date has been set, but it could be as soon as this fall.

It would be a relief for some. Environmentalists say the horses are degrading the otherworldly landscape at Mono Lake, including bird habitat and its famed tufa – textured rock columns that would look at home on Mars. Ranchers say the animals are gobbling down plants needed to sustain their cattle. Federal officials highlight the safety hazard posed by horses that have wandered onto highways.

Others see the move as a travesty. One method to oust the horses would use helicopters to drive them into a trap, which animal welfare groups say creates dangerous, even deadly, situations for horses. A pending federal bill would ban the practice.

Local tribes and nonprofits have partnered to fight the roundup plan, arguing that the Indigenous community should be tapped to manage the animals that roam their ancestral lands. A separate group of plaintiffs has sued the government, claiming it's reneging on its duty to protect the horses.

“We're all living spirits,” said Ronda Kauk, a member of the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a tribe. “And it's sad that people just don't care about another living thing because they think it doesn't belong there.”

Unseen evolution

For 36 years, Dave Marquart was part of a small team that monitored wetlands rimming Mono Lake, places so inaccessible even four-wheel drives can get stuck. Flung out far on the landscape, only wildlife could enjoy them. The area was a major nesting site for yellow-headed black birds, red-winged black birds, marsh wrens, soras and Virginia rails.

“There weren't a lot of people that saw the transition that I saw, from healthy wetlands to completely trampled and devastated wetlands,” said Marquart, who was an interpretive naturalist for the Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve until he retired in 2019. “It was quite a drastic change.”

Marquart recalled a time when he'd encounter fewer than 50 horses. They'd bolt when they saw his vehicle coming. That fear faded and their ranks grew. Over time, he said, they stamped ponds and urinated and defecated in the water. The birds stopped showing up.

Before retiring, Marquart said, he helped organize a field trip involving the Forest Service, BLM and State Parks to showcase the impacts.

“Everybody saw that it was an issue and felt that something needed to be done,” he said.

Today, sizable mounds of horse manure dot Warm Springs, a remote area along the eastern edge of Mono Lake that Marquart had raised the alarm about during his tenure. White bones of fallen equines rest in the alkaline meadows. Chestnut fur gleamed on a hoof attached to a leg bone.

Miller, the Mono Lake Committee's Eastern Sierra policy director, and Geoff McQuilkin, its executive director, led the way to a burbling spring rimmed by innumerable hoof prints. Surrounding vegetation was nibbled to nubs. Wildlife compete for the limited water here.

“The birds that would have a safe haven in that spring or be hidden away from raptors and predators overhead don't have that opportunity anymore,” McQuilkin said.

The pair first remembered the horses showing up in remote areas around the lake in 2015, as the state was gripped by drought. By 2021, as they pushed west, they landed at South Tufa, where tourists congregate to gaze at the limestone columns. In the spring of 2023, horse carcasses emerged along the shores of South Tufa and nearby Navy Beach as the snow from a winter of biblical proportions melted.

“The recent deaths of these horses provide further evidence that the size of this herd cannot be supported by the landscape which they are expanding onto,” Lisa Cox, a spokesperson for the Inyo National Forest, said at the time.

“They're medicine.”

On a pleasantly cool day in September, Rana Saulque stared transfixed at a group of roughly 50 wild horses in the River Spring Lakes Ecological Reserve, not far from her tribe's reservation near the town of Benton.

Saulque, vice chairwoman for the Utu Utu Gwaitu Paiute tribe, draws a parallel between ousting the horses and the historic persecution of her people by the government.

“They're going to run them down with helicopters and genocide them, just like they ran down us,” she said through tears.

A striking cremello horse stood out from the rest – a beloved subject for photographers who sojourn here. A brown foal with a white stripe on its muzzle teetered on toothpick legs. Several babies hugged close to their moms.

Mostly, the horses peacefully graze, but two rear up momentarily. “That's horsing around,” Saulque said. Then they begin galloping and suddenly they look powerful and sleek. Epic, like a poster for a classic western film.

“They're so magical,” the vice chairwoman said. “They're medicine for people.”

Federal officials stress that they have precautions in place to ensure safety during helicopter roundups. That includes avoiding peak foaling periods and hot weather that would stress the horses.

The Utu Utu Gwaitu Paiute are among a coalition that wants to pause the planned roundups for two years and ultimately secure land back to set aside a sanctuary for the horses to roam. As envisioned, local tribes would help manage the herd, including darting horses with a birth control vaccine to limit population growth. Horses could be put to work at pack stations, equine therapy and rodeo schools for kids, the group says.

The proposal could also help revive horse culture that runs deep in the tribal communities, Saulque said. Jim Walker, her great-great-grandfather and a respected medicine man, rode mustangs all the way to Florida, visiting tribes along the way to exchange medicine and horses.

Kauk's tribe historically rode the horses from Lee Vining into Yosemite to gather basket-making materials, among other activities. Mustangs were tapped for Native American rodeos and relay races, she added.

According to the coalition that includes the nonprofit American Wild Horse Conservation, the feds and groups like the Mono Lake Committee have the science all wrong. The herbivores chomp down invasive cheatgrass that poses wildfire risk, and their poop – maligned by many – actually spreads native seeds, they say.

Wild and free – for now

At the heart of the emotional battle playing out in the Eastern Sierra is the Montgomery Pass wild horse herd. According to the U.S. Forest Service, its origin is unknown. But there's speculation that it's linked to mustang drives between the Owens Valley and Nevada.

A 1971 law declared wild horses and burros “living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West,” and made it illegal to harass, capture or kill them on public lands. But the Forest Service and BLM, which became responsible for managing them, can remove “excess animals” to preserve the health of the range.

The way this often plays out is that horses are rounded up and offered for adoption or sale. Those that aren't taken in by a private owner are shipped to pastures where they often live out their remaining days.

Federal officials designated the Montgomery Pass Wild Horse Territory, a remote area spanning sagebrush steppe and pinyon pine forest east of Mono Lake. They say the land can sustainably support 138 to 230 horses.

As of last year, nearly 700 were documented in an aerial survey, with most ranging outside the territory, according to the agencies.

Now under a plan approved in March, up to 500 horses could be ousted, with the Forest Service leading the effort and BLM assisting.

Both agencies declined requests for interviews for this story, citing pending litigation. In August, a documentary filmmaker, primary care physician and wildlife ecologist sued the government authorities overseeing the agencies, claiming the roundups will decimate the herd to the point where long-term survival is unlikely.

“This case represents yet another attempt by the agencies to evade their statutory duties to protect, preserve and manage the herd,” the suit reads.

The government has agreed not to round up horses before Oct. 20, according to court documents.

When multiple uses collide

Leslie Hunewill's cattle ranching family sees quite a bit of “horse activity” on grazing lands in an area called the Mono Sand Flats, to the east and north of the lake. Since purchasing the right to use the public land, her outfit has been able to graze there for only about five weeks in the last two years – and not consecutively. The culprit? “A huge number of horses,” she said.

“Our cattle have not been out there,” she said. “There's nothing for them to eat.”

Cows aren't allowed on the roughly 50,000-acre expanse during the growing season. But the horses, facing no fences, go for what's green and pushing up, she said.

“It doesn't make sense for us to overuse or overgraze the land when we need to come back to it,” she said. “So when we are doing our part to manage the portion of it that we can, which is, say, our use of the cattle on that land, that's all well and good. But who is taking charge of the horses and saying, this is too heavy use?”

The law directs agencies to manage horse populations to maintain a “thriving natural ecological balance.” BLM and the Forest Service have to consider mustangs alongside grazing, wildlife and what's good for the land. Some say the agencies have kicked the can down the road on management of the Montgomery Pass herd.

Hunewill's family has deep roots in the Eastern Sierra. Her great-great-great-grandfather came to California in the 1860s as a gold miner. He struck it rich, and got into the lumber business. When that stopped paying out, he used his oxen to feed the town of Bodie.

Her family is still in the beef business, with the meat generally staying on the West Coast.

They employ quite a few mustangs at their guest ranch operation in the town of Bridgeport, including Jethro, a friendly brown fella with a splash of white on his forehead. They're hardy horses, and can be enlisted as pack animals high up in the mountains. Some don't need shoes because of their “great feet.”

But their robustness means “everybody's already got their mustang,” she said, stymieing the prospect of mass adoptions.

Shifting dynamics

Wild horse populations can increase as much as 20 percent a year. Montgomery Pass horses used to summer in the high country and were once kept in check by mountain lions that preyed on foals, according to John Turner, a professor at the University of Toledo College of Medicine, who studied the herd for decades.

That changed around 2008 or 2009, when the horses began lingering at lower elevations, where the open country makes it difficult for lions to hunt.

The herd's population surged.

Turner sees the government's current system of rounding up horses and holding them as unsustainable. And costly.

“The gathers are successful at that time, but the reproductive rate of the animals is greater than the capacity to remove them,” he said.

Dreamstime / TNS

You’re debt-free, now what?

Turn your money habits into financial freedom for life

By BERNADETTE JOY
Bankrate.com (TNS)

Congratulations! Becoming debt-free is a game-changer. Making that last payment on credit cards, student loans or whatever debt burden you carried must have been a huge weight off your shoulders. After having paid off $300,000 of debt, I know that feeling well. But when the celebratory vibes wear off and the weight is lifted, what comes next?

Without intention, it’s easy to slip back into old spending patterns, let lifestyle creep eat into your bottom line or simply drift without purpose. Shifting your debt-payoff habits into more complex savings and investing strategies can be intimidating.

For years, I viewed debt freedom as the ultimate financial goal, when in actuality, it was just the first step into financial freedom, and even retiring early.

Here are three strategies to carry into your debt-free so you can leverage the momentum you’ve built into long-term wealth.

1. Protect your peace with a robust ‘Keep Calm Fund’

I prefer the term “Keep Calm Fund” rather than emergency fund, because it doesn’t have to be a life-or-death situation for you to need to access your savings for unexpected events.

Even after you’re debt-free, surplus income doesn’t negate the need for a solid financial buffer. And right now, many Americans are falling short. According to Bankrate’s 2025 Annual Emergency Savings Report:

- Only 46 percent of U.S. adults have enough emergency savings to cover three months of expenses.
- About 24 percent of Americans have no emergency savings at all.
- Just 27 percent have enough saved to cover six months or more of expenses.
- Nearly 1 in 3 Americans (~37 percent) have tapped into their emergency savings in the previous 12 months.
- Meanwhile, 60 percent say they are uncomfortable with their level of emergency savings.

When you don’t have debt payments to worry about each month, you’ll have more disposable income. Avoid the temptation to spend it or dig yourself back into debt, and invest in a future rainy day instead.

What to do next

Since you’ve paid off debt, redirect what was going to interest payments into your Keep Calm Fund. Here are suggestions:

- Aim to save three months of expenses in a high-yield savings account to start, then possibly up to six months depending on job stability, dependents, health conditions or other unique circumstances.
- Automate savings transfers to this dedicated account and name it your “Keep Calm Fund” to remind yourself of its intention and purpose.
- Review annually (or after big life changes) to ensure you have the amount of savings you need. Costs will change as your life changes – what covered you three years ago may not suffice today.

2. Continue lifelong budgeting, but make it flexible and joyful

Paying off debt likely required strict budgeting, as it did for me. But data suggests that many Americans aren’t maintaining even basic budget review habits.

Fewer than one-third of Americans (~29 percent) reviewed their budget over a recent 30-day period, according to Bankrate’s 2025 Money and Mental Health Survey, and only about 34 percent tracked their spending in that same period.

And when it comes to discretionary spending, 54 percent expect to spend less on travel, dining out, or entertainment in 2025, according to Bankrate’s Discretionary Spending Survey.

Many people only budget sporadically, but rising costs and inflation are prompting consumers to trim both fun and essentials. I temporarily chose to forgo shopping, big trips and expensive dinners to pay off my student loans, and every sacrifice was well worth it. But when you’re debt-free, budgeting changes from survival to empowerment, and it took me some time to shift my mindset from cutting expenses to curating experiences.

What to do next

- Keep budgeting part of your regular monthly routine. It’s actually way more fun to budget without the stress of all those debt payments. Each month, review what you spent versus what you intended, what changed and which expenses you paused during debt payoff that you may want to bring back.
- Use budgets to align spending with your values in everyday life, not just to limit. Now you can allocate money intentionally, for joy, growth and giving. For example, I now budget for yoga, hip-hop classes and meals out with friends regularly, not just for special occasions.
- Build room in your budget for making core memories every year. Practice removing the guilt from this type of spending, as long as you budgeted for it.

I’m writing this article on my first trip to Malaysia, something I’ve always wanted to do since becoming debt-free. You didn’t pay off all this debt just to feel bad about having fun!

3. Protect and grow your wealth ecosystem

Debt freedom gives you real opportunity, not just relief. This is the stage to protect what you’ve built and grow forward. According to Bankrate’s 2025 Financial Regrets Survey,the most common regrets reported by respondents were not saving for retirement early enough and taking on too much credit card debt. However, around 31 percent of Americans are still willing to take on debt for travel, dining out and entertainment.

These data points illustrate the complexity of our attitudes toward spending and financial planning, making it easy to understand how many people can slip back into debt after paying it off. To avoid this backslide, maintain your focus on staying debt-free and growing your cushion.

What to do next

- Maintain the habit of paying off your credit cards weekly, not just monthly. Starting your budgeting routine with a clean credit card slate makes it easier to prevent debt from creeping back in.
- Review your insurance plans, including health, disability and life, if you have dependents. Your assets and future income need to be defended now that you are focused on building assets, not just paying down debt.
- If you don’t already, begin investing regularly in at least one retirement account until it’s maxed out to its IRS limit. I recommend starting with your employer retirement accounts first, if you have it. Just as it was thrilling to watch your debt balances shrink, it can be even more exciting to watch your retirement savings grow.

Final thoughts: The hard part is over – keep going

Many Americans remain financially fragile – lacking adequate emergency savings, hesitating to budget and still facing the risk of slipping back into debt. This doesn’t have to be your destiny.

Debt freedom is one of the biggest financial achievements you’ll make, but it’s not the finish line.

Personally, I’ve found saving and investing to be so much easier and more fun than paying down debt. If you’ve made it this far, you can have confidence that you already have the foundational skills to become a great investor and spender, too.

But you have the advantage now. You’ve built momentum. Use it to create buffers, align your finances with your values and protect your future. By continuing the intentional habits you’ve already implemented, a debt-free life can become a catapult for lasting financial security and meaning.

Visit Bankrate online at bankrate.com.

Food

Diced apple and butternut squash add seasonal fall flavor to this easy vegetarian curry.

Gretchen McKay / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette / TNS

Eye-opening apples

3 RECIPES EXPLORE OUR FAVORITE FRUIT'S SAVORY SIDE

By GRETCHEN McKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
(TNS)

Apples are plentiful and at their peak in Western Pennsylvania as we head into fall. They're also available in a wide variety of colors, flavors and textures, thanks to family-owned farm markets, fruit farms and orchards like Soergel Orchards, Trax Farm Market, Triple B Farms and Apple Castle in New Wilmington.

Usually, you don't have to think too hard about what to do with the a bag or bushel of fruit. Apples are terrific out of hand, of course, and make a great (and healthful) addition to your child's lunchbox. They also travel well, making them an excellent car food.

Thanks to the fruit's natural sweetness, apples lend themselves especially well to baked goods. You don't have to look too far to find any number of seasonal cakes, pies, crisps and crumbles built around apples as the star attraction.

End-of-season apples also cook down pretty easily into applesauce – with or without added sugar – and slices can be dried into chips for a good-for-you anytime snack.

Yet, confining our favorite fall fruit to the dessert table is to not put a full spin on its versatility.

Crisp and tart apples that hold their shape while cooked, such as the popular green Granny Smith, Pink Lady and Honeycrisp, can add a bright and tangy flavor to everything from salads to soups to gratins and curries. The fruit's natural sweetness and acidity also pairs well with savory, roasted vegetables like sweet potatoes, carrots, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts.

And if you're trying to get more plants into your diet? When marinated in a tangy vinaigrette, they make a surprisingly delicious addition to a cheese sandwich.

These savory recipes won't upset the apple cart. Instead, they're shine a light on the fruit's possibilities.

Roasted Brussels Sprouts and Apples

Serves 4

Brussels sprouts can be bitter when boiled, but stick them in the oven to roast and wow, it's magic! The high heat causes the vegetable's natural sugars to caramelize, bringing out their natural sweetness. Throwing a few apples onto the pan enhances the nutty flavor.

Be sure to pull off the loose outer green leaves and trim the sprouts' ends before cooking, and scatter them evenly on a baking tray. They're done when the leaves are just about to char, and the innermost part of the sprout is fork-tender.

1 pound Brussels sprouts, ends trimmed and outer leaves removed

1 large red or green apple, cored and cubed

1 medium red onion, cut in wedges

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 tablespoons maple syrup

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

3/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

3 sprigs of thyme

1/2 cup toasted pecans, optional

1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, optional

Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.

Cut Brussels sprouts in half, then place in a large bowl with apples and onions.

In a measuring cup, stir together olive oil, maple syrup, salt and pepper. Drizzle over the Brussels sprouts mixture and toss with your hands until everything is thoroughly coated.

Place the mixture on a rimmed baking sheet. Make sure Brussels sprouts are cut side down. (This ensures that they all get perfectly caramelized.)

Place sprigs of thyme on top of and around the veggies.

Bake for 35-40 minutes, shaking the pan a few times as they bake, until the apples are tender, the onions are soft and the sprouts look like they are starting to char.

Top with pecans and grated cheese, if desired, and serve while hot.

Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

Marinated Apple and Cheese Sandwich

Makes 4 sandwiches

Trying to eat more plants? The peppery flavor of arugula works incredibly well with sweet apples and savory cheddar in this surprisingly hearty sandwich.

The vinaigrette is so simple to make and adds more flavor; I saved the leftovers to use as a dressing on salad.

I made the sandwiches on toasted sunflower bread but any hearty variety works.

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons honey

4 teaspoons whole-grain mustard

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

2 small shallots, thinly sliced (about 1/3 cup)

2 small garlic cloves, grated

1 tart green apple (such as Granny Smith) unpeeled, cored and very thinly sliced crosswise

1 tart-sweet apple (such as Honeycrisp) unpeeled, cored and very thinly sliced crosswise

Salted butter, at room temperature

8 slices soft multigrain sandwich bread

4-8 ounces aged white cheddar cheese, thinly sliced

1 1/3 cups packed baby arugula

Whisk together vinegar, oil, honey, mustard, pepper, and salt in a medium saucepan; bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve honey. Stir in shallots and garlic. Remove from heat.

Place apple slices in a large, shallow, heatproof dish; pour hot vinegar mixture over apples, and toss to coat. Let stand at room temperature 45 minutes, tossing occasionally. Drain apples and discard vinegar mixture. (I saved it to use as a dressing.)

Spread a generous layer of butter on one side of each bread slice. Divide cheese, apple mixture and arugula evenly on buttered sides of four bread slices. Top with remaining bread slices, butter sides down. Serve immediately.

foodandwine.com

Apple Curry

Serves 6

This one-pot, lightly spiced curry pairs two favorite fall offerings: butternut squash and apples.

If you desire a protein kick, add a can of cooked, drained chickpeas or 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken cut into bite-sized chunks before adding the coconut milk.

Chopped cashews add a rich, nutty finish.

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large onion, chopped (about 1 cup)

3 large cloves garlic, minced

1-inch piece fresh ginger, finely minced

2 cups cubed butternut squash (about 1 small)

2 cored and roughly chopped apples (peel on)

2 tablespoons curry powder

1 (14-ounce) can light coconut milk

1/2 cup vegetable broth or water

1 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

Cooked white rice, for serving

Chopped cilantro, for garnish

Chopped cashews, for garnish

Add olive oil to a large stockpot or Dutch oven set over medium heat.

When hot, add in onion and cook for about 5 minutes, until tender. Add in garlic, ginger, butternut squash and apples. Cook for 3 minutes, then sprinkle with curry powder and stir to combine.

Pour in coconut milk and broth/water, and scrape up any bits that have gotten stuck to the bottom of the skillet. Turn heat down to medium and simmer for at least 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes, or until squash and apples are fork-tender, stirring occasionally and adjusting the heat as needed.

Remove from the heat. Taste and season with additional salt and pepper as needed.

Serve the curry with white rice, garnished with chopped cilantro and chopped cashews.

Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

Bacon makes everything better, including this sandwich

By BETH DOOLEY
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

The classic BLT is a source of delight, comfort and sustenance through the summer. The combination of sweet-tart tomato, crisp-rich bacon, crunchy lettuce and lush mayo defines a great sandwich with universal appeal.

The BLT was the first meal I learned to make for myself with my cousin Jack after surfing at the New Jersey shore. Sometimes in our fierce, sunburned hungers, we'd swap out the bacon for potato chips. We'd slice thick our grandmother's garden tomatoes, add iceberg lettuce, and spread Hellman's on puffy white bread, then chase it all down with a frosty bottle of Coke.

Now that we're past tomato season, the quest is on for a sandwich with autumn appeal.

Start with great bread with slices you'd like to enjoy on their own. Toasting can improve the flavor and texture if it's in danger of becoming soggy. Choose ingredients with contrasting textures and tastes. How about sharp Cheddar cheese, bacon and snappy apples griddled to a golden fare-thee-well? Or funky brie, bacon and mellow sweet pear on a toasted baguette?

Dreamstime / TNS

Strips of crispy bacon on a cast iron skillet.

The through line for any great sandwich is bacon – savory and chewy with just enough crunch. Come winter, I'll lean into slices of cooked beets and bacon with a swipe of chevre on multigrain bread or slices of roast butternut squash and bacon with a drizzle of hot honey on rye.

A little well-cooked bacon does a whole lot of good. Look for bacon with fat evenly distributed through each strip. Thick slices hold up to cooking and won't crumble as you build the sandwich. Among the different cooking methods, I prefer sheet-pan baking for easy cleanup, especially when multiple slices are involved (see the cooking tip below).

Salty and succulent, bacon is the secret to the perfect hand-held meal.

Bacon, Brie and Pear Baguette Sandwich

Serves 4 to 6

The baguette makes a sturdy base for these rich, flavorful ingredients; toasted sourdough slices will also work well. We've added a smear of orange marmalade for sweet tang, but that's optional. Slice the sandwich into halves or quarters for appetizers. They'll hold up for a day when made ahead and covered.

1 (18- to 24-in.) baguette, sliced on the diagonal

1 to 2 tbsp. orange marmalade, optional

4 to 6 oz. brie cheese, sliced thin

1 large pear, peeled, cored and sliced thin

8 slices cooked bacon (see Cooking Tip)

Toast the baguette slices. Spread each slice with the marmalade. On half of the baguette slices, arrange the brie on one of the sides spread with marmalade, then place the sliced pear on the brie, and place the bacon on top of the brie. Place the remaining baguette slices, marmalade side down, on top of the bacon. Cut and serve.

COOKING TIP: The best way to cook bacon is in the oven (less spatter and cleanup). Preheat the oven to 400 degrees and line a baking sheet with enough aluminum foil to hang over the sides of the pan. Arrange the bacon slices over the aluminum foil so they do not touch. Bake until crisp, about 12 to 15 minutes. Remove the sheet pan and using tongs, lift the bacon to set on paper-towel lined plate to drain.

Beth Dooley is the author of "The Perennial Kitchen." Find her at bethdooleyskitchen.com.

'Frankenstein' is its own marvelous monster

By AMY NICHOLSON
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

'Frankenstein'

MPA rating: R (for bloody violence and grisly images)

Running time: 2:29

How to watch: In theaters Oct. 17 and streaming on Netflix Nov. 7

'Frankenstein" has haunted Guillermo del Toro since he was a kid who barely reached the Creature's knees. Back in 2011, the writer-director was already tinkering with a version of the monster that resembled a blend of Iggy Pop and Boris Karloff with jagged sutures, gaunt wrinkles and a crushed nose. Since then, Del Toro has made changes. The 2025 model is played by Jacob Elordi, a 6-foot-5 actor often cast as the ideal human specimen in movies like "Saltburn" and who here howls to life with handsome features and rock star swagger. But your eyes keep staring at his pale, smooth seams. He doesn't look hand-stitched – he looks a little like a modern android.

Of course he does. The decades have given Del Toro time to think about what truly scares him. It's not monsters. He loves all disfigured nasties, be they swamp creatures, eyeball-less ogres or bolt-headed Hellboys. It's tech bros, like the ones weaseling into Hollywood, who give their every innovation a sterile sheen.

"Frankenstein" is the director's lifelong passion project: He doesn't just want to make a "Frankenstein" but the "Frankenstein," so he's faithfully set his adaptation in the past. But he's adjusted the wiring so that 1850s Europe reminds us of Silicon Valley. The result is the best movie of his career.

This Baron Victor Frankenstein (Oscar Isaac) is a short-sighted egomaniac who barks over his critics while jabbing the air with his fingers. "I fail to see why modesty is considered a virtue," he says with a snort.

And Del Toro has written Victor an enabler: a deep-pocketed investor named Henrich Harlander (Christoph Waltz) who struts into Victor's science lecture hunting for a whizkid to crack the code to immortality. With his gold-heeled shoes and a confidence that he's too rich to die, Waltz's wealthy arms dealer is a 19th-century take on venture capitalists like Bryan Johnson and Peter Thiel who've been poking into the feasibility of pumping their veins with young blood.

"Don't be a reasonable man," Henrich advises Victor. The assumption is – and remains – that tycoons and geniuses deserve to run rampant. Great success demands an indifference to the rules. And if you're wondering whether money or brains has more power, there's a scene in which Henrich uses a chamber pot and smugly orders Victor to "flush that for me."

Del Toro is wired into the outrage in Mary Shelley's sly 1818 novel, a nightmarish satire about men who care only about yelling "first!" without asking what horrors come next. Centuries ago, she warned of man's ill-considered rush to create artificial intelligence. Today, Dr. Frankenstein's descendants keep promising that AI won't destroy civilization while ignoring Shelley's point, that the inventor is more dangerous than his monster.

Victor, a stunted man-child who drinks milk served by a sommelier, is frozen in the I'll-show-him stage of growing up with an abusive father (Charles Dance) who whipped him when he got a wrong answer on his schoolwork. Victor's name, we're reminded, means "winner," a symbol of the pressure he's under to excel.

Isaac plays him with a pitchman's exuberance that sags as the corners of his mouth wrench down in disappointment. He's hacked how to make a disembodied head moan in agony. But having rarely felt affection, Victor doesn't know how to generate that emotion at all. Worse, it hasn't occurred to him to think past the triumph of his product launch, that his Creature can't be readily unplugged. The only kind characters in the movie are a rural blind man (David Bradley) and the moth-like Mia Goth, double-cast as Victor's mother, Claire, and his brother's fiancee, Elizabeth. A convent girl with a creepy streak, Elizabeth sees beauty in biology, leaning over a corpse's flayed back to appreciate the intricacy of its ventricles. But the more she studies Victor, the less impressed she gets.

Because Shelley came up with "Frankenstein" as an 18-year-old newlywed who'd just lost a baby, her message gets boiled down to gender: Women birth life, men mimic it. Really, the feminine strength of the book lies in its foxy, shifting narration that opens with a prologue from an Arctic explorer who's gotten his sailors trapped in the ice, before transitioning to Victor's story and then the Creature's. Like a hostess who secretly loathes her guests, Shelley encourages her characters to flatter themselves and expose their braggadocio.

Del Toro has kept that tactic and he's kept the book's structure. But within that framework, he's changed nearly everything else to make Victor more culpable. Unlike the 1931 film, there's no Igor and no excuse of accidentally using the wrong brain. This Victor does his own dirty work and what goes wrong is his fault. Meanwhile, Del Toro amps up the action, starting the film off with a ghastly great sequence in which Elordi's Creature punches a sailor so hard his spine snaps into a backward somersault.

"What manner of devil made him?" the Captain (Lars Mikkelsen) exclaims. Victor guiltily explains why he played God.

Being a futurist isn't bad. Henrich, an early adopter of daguerreotype cameras, shoots photographs of women posing with skulls like he's paving the way for Del Toro's whole filmography. But pompous Henrich and Victor don't appreciate that their accomplishments are built on other's sacrifices. When the cinematographer Dan Laustsen pans across a battlefield of dead soldiers, it feels like a silent scream. Henrich made his fortune killing these men; now, Victor will salvage their body parts.

Del Toro delights in the kinetic gusto of the tale, the grotesquerie of cracking limbs and blood sloshing about Victor's shoes. In the laboratory, dead leaves and buzzing flies whirl through the air as if to keep up with the inventor's wild ambitions and Alexandre Desplat's swirling orchestral score. The production design by Tamara Deverell is superb as are the costumes by Kate Hawley, who shrouds Goth in dramatic chiffon layers and dresses laced to highlight her vertebrae. (This movie loves bones as much as Sir Mix-A-Lot loved backs.)

As Victor rudely flings around torsos and limbs, it's clear that he only values life if it's branded with his name. So yes, of course, Elordi's Creature looks good. He's been assembled from the choicest bits of man flesh to show off the talent of his creator, not so different from Steve Jobs caressing samples of brushed aluminum. When Elordi's Creature pleads for a companion, a sliver of sculpted abs peeking out from under five hulking layers of wool and fur, you expect half the audience's hands to shoot up and volunteer.

Elordi has adopted one or two of Karloff's mannerisms: the arms outstretched in search of warmth, the lurching walk. You can see that he's a tad lopsided on the left side, presumably because Victor couldn't find matching femurs. Mostly, he's his own monster, neither the calculating serial murderer of the book nor Karloff's reactive, animalistic killer, but a scapegoat who finally starts leveling his foes with bone-breaking efficiency.

Towering over Victor by almost a foot, Elordi's Creature dwarfs his creator physically, morally and emotionally. There's anguish in his eyes, and when Del Toro shows us the world through his perspective, humanity itself appears anti-life, a pestilence that destroys without hesitation.

There's a pack of digital wolves that just looks silly. Otherwise, you trust how intensely Del Toro has doted upon every detail. I was flummoxed by a row of servants flanking young Victor (Christian Convery) who appeared to be wearing gauzy bags over their heads. What are those for? My theory is it's a tribute to the veil Karloff sported during lunch breaks, so as not to frighten any pregnant secretaries on the Universal lot.

Eschewing mobs of pitchfork-wielding villagers, Del Toro focuses on Victor's inability to parent his unholy son. And while the end stretch gets a bit too stiff and speechy, particularly with a line that Victor is the "true monster," I loved the moment when the Creature, venting on behalf of all frustrated children however big they've grown, growls, "The miracle is not that I should speak but that you would listen."

This deservedly anticipated "Frankenstein" transforms that loneliness into stunning tableaux of Victor and his immortal Creature tethered together by their mutual self-loathing. One man's heart never turned on. One can't get his heart to turn off. Ours breaks.

Jacob Elordi as The Creature in Frankenstein.

Ken Woroner / Netflix

MOVIE REVIEW

Sabrina Lantos / Universal Pictures / TNS

Mason Thames, left, and Ethan Hawke in “Black Phone 2,” directed by Scott Derrickson.

‘Black Phone 2’ is different from, not better than first flick

By **MARK MESZOROS**
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio) (TNS)

‘Black Phone 2’

★★ ½

MPA rating: R (for strong violent content, gore, teen drug use, and language)

Running time: 1:54

How to watch: In theaters

As evidenced by 2012’s “Sinister” and 2021’s “The Black Phone,” director Scott Derrickson has a gift for blending realism with the supernatural – and for conjuring a sense of dread that the viewer can’t help but share with the films’ characters.

That gift is on display in the sequel to the latter, “Black Phone 2,” in theaters this week.

“Black Phone 2” is set four years after the events of its predecessor, which earned more than $160 million at the worldwide box office and has scored myriad fans since it landed on Peacock. The follow-up sees franchise villain the Grabber (Ethan Hawke) out to exact revenge on his slayer, the now-17-year-old Finney (Mason Thames), from, well, hell. It’s silly-but-standard-enough horror-movie stuff, and Derrickson and his filmmaking collaborators sell it well.

For a while.

That palpable dread – earned from myriad effective filmmaking elements, including cinematography (Pär M. Ekberg), production design (Patti Podesta), editing (Louise Ford) and the unsettling musical score (Atticus Derrickson, son of the director) – eventually give way to over-the-top horror spectacle as our heroes desperately attempt to accomplish the goal that somehow and for some reason will defeat the Grabber.

The director and his co-writer and producing partner, C. Robert Cargill, also deserve credit for straying more than you may have expected from the formula of “The Black Phone.” We see that titular, unconnected phone that was key to the 2022 film’s events, hanging in the basement where the Grabber held Finney hostage, but only a couple of times and only briefly.

“Black Phone 2” begins with a ringing black phone, but this rotary number resides in a booth in a snowy, mountainous part of Colorado. We will learn the identity of the girl who speaks into it soon enough.

We then cut to Denver in the movie’s present day, 1982, where and when Finney is introducing his fists to a schoolmate who’d razzed him about his experience with the Grabber – much to the disapproval of his younger sister, Gwen (Madeleine McGraw).

Refreshingly, the foul-mouthed 15-year-old takes center stage in this intermittently scary affair, the girl suffering from incredibly disturbing dreams, accompanied by sleepwalking, that connect to her family’s past.

Finney, meanwhile, is haunted by ringing phones, the young man repeatedly answering and quickly telling the person on the other lines that he’s sorry but that he cannot help them.

Eventually, Gwen, Finney and Ernesto (a returning Miguel Mora) – a goofy-but-sweet love interest for Gwen whose brother was one of the Grabber’s victims communicating with Finney four years ago – all end up at a winter camp that Gwen wants to investigate.

Of course, a blizzard that made it nearly impossible for them to arrive in one piece means that, for the time being, it’s just them and a few folks who run the Christian-focused camp, including its leader, Mando (Demián Bichir, “A Better Life”) and his capable niece, Mustang (Arianna Rivas, “A Working Man”). A camp is a classic horror-flick setting, and this one is home to the aforementioned, long-not-operational phone booth, which rings just about anytime Finney is within earshot.

As Gwen works to unearth the connection between the camp and her nightmares, the Grabber appears to have Finney where he wants him.

On the plus side, add to the list of strengths of “Black Phone 2” the performances by its leads, starting with McGraw (“Secrets of Sulphur Springs,” “Ant-Man and the Wasp”). She does a nice job as Gwen, who’s both vulnerable AND comfortable firing back at adults who question her with highly offensive phrases. Plus, she and Mora share an absolutely hilarious scene at night at the camp. (It feels a little wedged-in, honestly, but we get the need for a bit of levity at that point in the proceedings.)

And while he’s now more of a supporting player, Thames – turning in strong work earlier this year as the gradually heroic Hiccup in the live-action version of “How to Train Your Dragon” – remains compelling as Finney, who, despite his resentment over his father’s alcoholic past, frequently turns to marijuana to deal with his Grabber-related trauma.

A mention of the performance of Hawke (“Training Day,” “The Purge”) feels obligatory, but he’s asked to do one-note work here. The Grabber is little more than the embodiment of evil this go-round.

After the highly effective setup and a first major encounter with the vengeful Grabber, “Black Phone 2” begins to lose steam.

While incorporating several ideas from Derrickson and Cargill – a tandem whose writing credits also include the Derrickson-directed “Doctor Strange,” a better-than-average Marvel Cinematic Universe entry from 2016 – “The Black Phone” was based on a short story by Joe Hill, son of horror great Stephen King. Lacking that type of foundation, the storytelling isn’t as compelling in its sequel, which loses more than the “The” from the first feature.

And the film’s frenzied climax, as the good guys fight the Grabber on two supernatural fronts, has too much going on, including – wait for it – ice skating. (We couldn’t help but think of a line spoken by Rick Moranis’ Dark Helmet from 1987’s “Spaceballs”: “Too bad this isn’t the ‘Wide World of Sports’!”)

“Black Phone 2” boasts enough reasons to answer its call, but as the powers that be seemingly could resurrect the Grabber anytime they like for what, you fear, could be increasingly unimpressive efforts, you may want to block its number moving forward.

MOVIE REVIEW

‘Springsteen’ is more character study than biopic

By **KATIE WALSH**
Tribune News Service (TNS)

‘Springsteen: Deliver Me From Nowhere’

★★ ½

Running time: 2 hours

Rated: PG-13 for thematic material, some sexuality, strong language, and smoking.

Where to watch: In theaters Friday

Writer-director Scott Cooper doesn’t want to make a music biopic. At least not the kind of music biopic you expect. Instead, in “Springsteen: Deliver Me From Nowhere,” he offers a character study as biopic, riding a similar groove as his Oscar-winning 2009 directorial debut “Crazy Heart.”

“Deliver Me From Nowhere” doesn’t try to tell the entire life story of New Jersey’s beloved rock bard, Bruce “The Boss” Springsteen – in fact, it doesn’t even really cover his biggest hits. Instead, “Deliver Me From Nowhere,” which Cooper based on the Warren Zanes book of the same name, focuses on a contemplative period in Springsteen’s life and career, a time when the musician dug deep to exorcise his own demons, producing the songs for his 1982 acoustic album “Nebraska.”

“The Bear” star Jeremy Allen White hunches into leather jackets and flannels, dark curls coquettishly kissing his brow, in order to embody Springsteen on screen. Like most musical biopics these days, the audience has to enter into an agreement with the film, suspending disbelief. Does White disappear into the role? Does he look exactly like Springsteen? No. But he’s the symbol of Springsteen here, and he captures the star’s flinty gaze and rock ‘n’ roll rasp while performing the songs himself, and brings his own intense soulfulness to the role.

Using Zane’s book, Cooper wants to present a study of the creative process, and how isolating, transporting and transformative it can be to tear out your soul, spill your guts and express something so personal that it becomes universal, as Springsteen did with “Nebraska.”

Holed up at a rental home in Colts Neck, New Jersey, in late 1981, Bruce has just finished a tour and is trying to readjust to the quiet, which is just too loud. He tries to take the edge off with nights at his hometown rock club, The Stone Pony, and a situationship with a fan, Faye (Odessa Young). But his past haunts him, especially his childhood with an alcoholic, emotionally neglectful father (Stephen Graham) and loving but turbulent mother (Gabby Hoffman).

Cooper visualizes Springsteen’s emotional and creative churn through black-and-white childhood flashbacks, and scenes of him driving around his old haunts in a muscle car, as well as tender montages of Bruce and Faye playing with her daughter at the boardwalk. Unfortunately though, Cooper can’t escape certain hackneyed biopic tropes in representing the songwriting, which are almost impossible to avoid.

Bruce ruminates over Flannery O’Connor stories and Terrence Malick’s “Badlands,” which he happens upon while channel surfing one night. He goes down a rabbit hole of news stories about Charles Starkweather, the spree killer who inspired the film. He catches a screening of “Night of the Hunter,” reminiscing about his father taking him to see the film in the middle of the school day.

Out of this muck of memory and fiction and real-life horror emerge the songs of “Nebraska,” recorded in his bedroom with a 4-track recorder procured by his guitar tech Mike Batlan (Paul Walter Hauser), mixed down through an Echoplex and a water-damaged boom box.

This part of “Deliver Me From Nowhere” shines, especially the catnip for audio nerds, as Springsteen synthesizes his own memories with something dark and distinctly American to produce “Nebraska,” a distorted, atmospheric cassette tape that he insists on reproducing exactly as is, much to the confusion and chagrin of his engineer Chuck Plotkin (Marc Maron) and long-suffering but ever-devoted manager, Jon Landau (Jeremy Strong).

Half the movie belongs to Landau, as one of the unsung heroes of this album. The film is in part a tribute to those people who support artists and their vision but don’t necessarily get the glory. Cooper takes the time to illustrate how Landau protects Bruce’s space to create and later protects his art, ensuring it’s released the way he wants, despite the protestations of record executives.

The film’s style evokes rough-hewn authenticity, shot with a hand-held camera by cinematographer Masanobu Takayanagi, who captures the bright, sweaty chaos of a rock show on stage, low-lit tender moments between lovers, offbeat neon Americana, and intimate, natural close-ups. Jeremiah Fraites’ score beautifully melds with and interpolates these iconic songs.

While a thoughtful exploration of the creative process, “Deliver Me From Nowhere” loses its way toward the end, meandering aimlessly into a depressive period of Springsteen’s, and it never quite regains its footing.

Cooper explicitly denies the big, soaring moments, delivering emotional highs in the form of a backstage hug, or the E-Street Band running through a glorious “Born to Run” in the studio. The film is a more quiet, wintry contemplation and tortured soul-searching. If not entirely successful, it’s still a fascinating take on how we put rock stars on screen, and a valiant attempt to understand how they make the music that moves us.

I watched *'Love Is Blind'* Season 9 blindfolded, and it's a roller coaster

By KAITLYN HUAMANI
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Netflix / TNS

"Love Is Blind" follows participants who get engaged to someone they've spoken to but have never seen.

This article contains spoilers for Season 9 of "Love Is Blind."

I see faces in everything – a slice of Swiss cheese, the front of a sedan, even an electrical outlet. So when I watched "Love Is Blind" with a blanket draped over my television, I didn't think it would be difficult to imagine what the participants looked like.

I was wrong.

Participants of Netflix's popular dating series are single people who say they are ready for marriage, and they enter "the experiment," as the show's creator Chris Coelen calls it, where they date potential partners through individual "pods," in which they can speak to each other but cannot see each other. They each aim to find their future husband or wife, and it isn't until they are already engaged that they see each other. Four weeks later, they say "I do" – assuming all goes well, and it usually doesn't.

As a devoted fan of the series, I decided to get a taste of the experiment myself with Season 9. I watched the first six episodes, where the participants are blindly dating each other, completely blind myself. Only when the couples revealed themselves to each other did I see them. I call it "Love Is Double Blind." (Although the trend of watching the show this way has popped up on social media, that moniker has not.)

What I learned from my own experiment is that it's somewhat easy to see (or rather hear, I suppose) which couples work on a fundamental level and which couples don't when your judgment is not clouded by appearances. I also realized pretty much everyone looked nothing like what I had pictured, which could be what some participants experience after seeing the person they're supposed to very quickly marry for the first time.

I diligently took notes as I listened to the early episodes (just like the participants do on their pod dates) and broke down my thoughts episode by episode. From Sparkle Megan's competing love interests to the dramatic breakups this season, all of the drama and the cringe were still present, even through this unusual viewing experience.

Episode 1: 'A Love That Sparkles'

This episode was, by far, the hardest to watch in terms of adjusting to my "blind" experience. I started by blindfolding myself and quickly realized that made my notes incoherent. I opted to swap the blindfold for a blanket covering my TV, which was better, but I cracked the code by the end of this episode. The blanket-on-the-TV method works best if you don't cover up the lower third of the screen so you can see the participants' ages, names and occupations. This also helps if you, like me, are reliant on subtitles.

Once I figured out the optimal way to pursue "blind" viewing, it was still difficult to keep track of the participants, but a handful stood out. Patrick Suzuki quickly expressed his insecurities about being Asian American, which made me think he wasn't quite ready for a show like this where your insecurities can be tested, especially after participants become engaged. (Do I look like what they expected me to look like? Am I their type? Do they still love me in the "real world"?)

I did note that Patrick and Anna Yuan, who also happens to be Asian American, seemed like a great match in their early conversations even before they knew each other's ethnicity – they later had an open conversation about it.

Megan Walerius, whose opening line for all her pod dates was that she calls herself "Sparkle Megan," had strong connections with Blake Anderson, Jordan Keltner and Mike Brockway. Early on, Mike seemed like the best match in terms of chemistry but the worst in terms of building a happy, healthy relationship.

Episode 2: 'Love Me When I'm Blind?'

Ali Lima and Anton Yarosh were the first couple we saw get engaged, so they were the first couple I saw at all (although they hyped up the reveal in Episode 1, I didn't get to see them until the top of Episode 2). It felt like we barely got to know them at all before the reveal because there was just too much ground to cover with all the key players. I disliked Anton's comment about how Ali could have been "twice" her size, but chalked it up to nerves and adrenaline that I imagine would be coursing through him in that moment.

Madison Maidenberg's honesty about her vision issues and the possibility she could go blind one day was sad to learn, but it was nice to hear her being vulnerable, and it seemed like her match Joe Ferrucci took it well. Edmond Harvey and Kalybriah Haskin appeared to be an unproblematic, strong (albeit unexpected) fit, at least so far. Nick Amato already came off as a player, and I'm not a fan of the spicy talk in the pods. Isn't your family going to watch this?

With Patrick, the insecurity about his identity and his hesitation to share his ethnicity with Kacie McIntosh was uncomfortable to listen to – I do not envy those who actually watched this scene. Kacie was receptive and open to the conversation, but it still felt like Patrick and Anna made a good match at this point, even if she and Blake also seemed to really work together. So many love triangles!

The bright spot of the episode was Joe's proposal to Madison, which seemed genuine and heartfelt. The low point was Anna ghosting Patrick. That was unexpected and made me feel terrible for him, but again, I was grateful I didn't have to watch the cringey moment.

Episode 3: 'Ghost Town'

Megan was in a tough spot here. Mike was the guy she says she would typically go for in the real world. But Jordan was a better fit emotionally, at least in my mind. Blake, however, bowed out and left the show early, like Anna. That left the door open for Jordan, so it was a win in my book. If Blake's departure had led her to Mike, I would have been more upset.

Madison and Joe's reveal (and his shock) felt like one of the more realistic ones I've seen on this show. Matching a stranger's face to the voice you fell in love with would probably be pretty jarring. Listening to the show as opposed to watching has made me a lot more sympathetic to the more awkward or surprised reveals. I'll cut Joe some slack here, but I'll be watching him with closer eyes now that I can actually see him.

Edmond's proposal to Kalybriah and their reveal later on felt perfect for their personalities. They seem to have had the most open and deep conversations so far, but I always have to wonder if the edit makes anyone seem more deep or more shallow than they are to favor the juicier stuff. Maybe what we're seeing of Edmond and KB is a fraction of their conversations that happen to be interesting, and the rest could be unbearably boring.

A quick rundown on my thoughts of all the other key players at this point: Kait Nemunaitis and Nick seem like a better fit than Nick and Annie Lancaster, Annie and Brenden Guthrie are probably not a match made in heaven, Patrick and Kacie have very little chemistry, and I still really don't like Mike (Sorry Mike! I just personally wouldn't want to date you).

Episode 4: 'The Dangerous Games We Play'

Nick's conversations with Kait about religion were frustrating to listen to – he seemed to act blindsided that she didn't have a strong connection to religion after she articulated her feelings well in an earlier conversation. Annie and Nick feel like they might be a better fit in terms of their background and upbringings, but listening to their conversation about raising LGBTQ+ kids was uncomfortable. Annie said she felt like young people identifying as a part of the LGBTQ+ community was "100%" a fad, and Nick said when kids "start having those thoughts too young," it's concerning to him. (Both Nick and Annie have since walked back those comments in recent interviews.)

By the end of the episode, it felt like Nick was trying to make the emotional connection with Annie catch up to their chemistry. "This is going to end in a messy breakup," I wrote in my notebook, predicting the demise of their relationship. And poor Brenden, who is so clearly in love with Annie, didn't win her heart. I think he may have dodged a bullet.

On Kacie and Patrick, let me first say that I don't understand how anyone could talk dirty in the pods, especially knowing that this is going to be televised. She did seem to love him, but it feels like that won't be enough to overcome his insecurities. Patrick's proposal was incredibly awkward – if I was proposed to and my partner immediately erupted into screams of "Let's go!" after I said yes, I might revoke that answer.

At this point, the competition between Jordan and Mike over Megan was heating up – and their responses to that competition were pretty telling. Mike was cocky and overconfident and Jordan was just concerned with Megan's happiness. I began wondering here whether their sweetness toward her was inflated or artificial because of this duel between the two men. Is flattery and kindness a means to an end for these guys? It felt that way for Mike.

Episode 5: 'I Want You to Want Me'

This was the final blind episode for me. The biggest crime was the music. I'm not the first person to make the point that the music on the series is almost sickeningly on the nose, but this episode took the cake for me. Mike says to Megan, "I want you to want me," in a rare moment of vulnerability for him. In what felt like a record-scratch moment, especially for me without any visuals, the soundtrack burst into a song with those exact lyrics. We got the point already!

Nick and Annie's proposal was sweet, but I still felt pessimistic about them. Their reveal was the most surprising because I just couldn't pin down any semblance of an idea of what they looked like. They look nice together, but I jotted down a gut feeling that they're not going to last.

I was happy for Patrick and Kacie in the reveal – it was still awkward, but they both seemed so happy. I noted here that if I had seen Kacie when they were talking in the pods, I never would have thought it would work out between them because she wouldn't go for a guy like Patrick based off looks alone. I still don't feel like they have the strongest relationship, but they had a sweet reveal.

Megan and Jordan looked like a good pair together in their giddy reveal, and I was relieved she didn't follow through with Mike. I was also happy to finally see one of the men walk his fiancee back to her side of the room once they have to part ways.

Episode 6: 'Coming in Hot'

From this episode on, my blanket was no longer obscuring my screen. It took some adjustment to reconcile the image of each person I had crafted in my brain and what they actually looked like, but once I got over that, it was nice to see what was happening.

The early events of the episode between Kacie and Patrick did make me wish I had that blanket back though. I hate that she couldn't give him a straight answer about whether she was breaking up with him, and that she insisted it wasn't about his looks. Poor Patrick, he deserves better.

Once the rest of the couples got to Mexico for their romantic getaways, it was fun to see how they interacted with each other. It was also fun to see those dumb, giant golden goblets the producers make them drink every liquid out of – I had missed those during my blind viewing.

Issues between the couples started coming to a head now – Edmond was frustrated with Kalybriah's decision to wait until the wedding to have sex and Joe was behaving in a pretty bizarre manner. His charm was starting to wear off on Madison (and me).

You can always expect drama when all of the couples meet (and see each other) for the first time, and this episode did not disappoint.

Episodes 7-11

I'll break my thoughts down on these episodes by couple for simplicity's sake.

Annie and Nick

My prediction was correct. It's not a surprise that they split. Their pod conversations never felt like they got that deep and it didn't feel like there was a strong enough connection between them to justify getting married, especially so quickly.

Madison and Joe

Joe's hesitation in the reveal should have been more telling to me, I suppose. His behavior was pretty erratic from the first episode out of the pods and that only seemed to continue and worsen. I feel bad for sweet Madison, but I'll admit I'm also just generally inclined to side with a woman over a man.

Given the likelihood that Madison will lose her vision, I was hoping she would find a match that truly felt love is blind and would embrace her.

And as much hate as this show gets for the music choices, playing Sabrina Carpenter's "Manchild" as Joe ran out of his tuxedo fitting was pretty perfect. More of that, please!

Ali and Anton

This just doesn't feel like a perfect match. They both bother me here and there – Anton's drinking and Ali's insistence on not picking up after herself, for example – but neither one of them seems like a bad person or a bad partner. By Episode 11, I just didn't think they should get married, and their conversations before the proposal didn't seem meaningful enough to warrant an engagement.

Megan and Jordan

There's clearly a lot at play between this couple in terms of adjusting to each other's lives, especially since Jordan has a young son, but both seem to be handling the hurdles well together.

I did wonder what the deal is with Jordan's job, though. Is he secretly a CIA agent? His occupation is listed as a service manager and he told Megan on their first date that he works in transportation and logistics, but his job has been the subject of intense online sleuthing and scrutiny since their respective work lives became a sore spot between the couple. Other than the tension between their different lifestyles, for some reason, they feel like the only couple I could see having a successful marriage down the line.

Kalybriah and Edmond

Edmond's personality seemed to be different in the pods than in real life – he seemed softer and more open to communicating before they got engaged. Kalybriah even noted in one argument that he acts differently when the cameras are rolling than when they're actually alone. I've always wondered how the reality television element of the experiment messes with the integrity of the experiment itself.

I do think they could work out together, but it just feels like they need more time to date each other before jumping into marriage.

Episode 12: 'Vow or Never'

The shocking finale this season revealed that for the first time, none of the relationships on "Love Is Blind" ended in marriage. The dramatic scoring and tense editing makes the "no" at the altar feel so shocking, but after the initial dramatic moment (and another look at my notes throughout the season), it's not entirely surprising there weren't any happy newlyweds at the end.

Although I had pegged Ali and Anton as an imperfect fit, her interviews the morning before the wedding, the sweet moment she shared with Anton's mom and her moving vows all made me think she was going to say yes.

Kalybriah's "no" seemed fitting given the issues that they had in the weeks leading up to the wedding, and Edmond's response was probably the most tempered I've seen from anyone getting rejected at the altar. Their breakup highlighted the extremes of this experiment. If the show was crafted to help the couples end up with happy, healthy relationships instead of a design that maximizes drama and makes for juicy, must-see TV, maybe KB and Edmond would have had more time to see their relationship through. Or, at the very least, they wouldn't have the added pressure of every word being scrutinized by a national audience.

Megan and Jordan's breakup hurt the most as someone who noticed their strong emotional bond since the beginning. It's upsetting to see real life get in the way of the love they have for each other, but it's also clear it wouldn't have been a smooth ride if they did get married. Megan was kind though to not make the sting of the split worse by going through the motions of the wedding day just to say no.

Parting words on 'blind' viewing

My experiment was a success, I'd say, in that I challenged myself to think deeper about the foundation of these relationships beyond the visuals, which exposed that there were very few contenders for happy marriages this season.

Would I watch future seasons like this? Only if I did so with a companion. It's a particularly challenging test of your memory to watch like this alone, and I imagine it would be more fun with a group, especially so you can revel in your shock at the reveals with people who understand how impossible it is to envision what these people look like.

Sombr is 2025's sultry alt-pop star

Can he join the rock greats too?

By AUGUST BROWN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Back in August, the 20-year-old Shane Boose of Sombr threw his record release party on the patio of the Chateau Marmont in West Hollywood. Sombr's debut album, "I Barely Know Her," wouldn't be out for a few days yet, but under the patio's twinkling fairy lights, he was already sweating the numbers a bit.

"Please go stream the album," the lanky, severely-cheekboned Boose asked to a packed crowd of lissome, 20-something influencers and besuited industry types. "I really need to pay back this advance."

He shouldn't have stressed. After Boose cruised through "12 to 12," Sombr's urbane, disco-funky single, Boose leaped into the hotel's turquoise pool. Soon his backing band joined him, soaked after a hot night of anticipation as the hottest new rock act in the country.

As rowdy behavior at the Chateau goes, it wasn't quite Billy Idol stripping nude and trashing his room for want of more tequila. But it did feel like a callback to an incandescent era – a young band enjoying its spoils at L.A.'s most infamous party palace.

"I had just landed from Japan the night before and I was exhausted," Boose said the next month, speaking on Zoom from Nashville after rehearsals for his current tour. "The pool thing was completely unplanned. I didn't know that my band was gonna follow me in. It was one of those rare times when I'm not so stressed about this career. I just felt like I was finally enjoying it and just living."

Sombr is a rare rock project in 2025: indebted to high-panache indie with an arch wit and real feeling, but running up the Hot 100 like a TikTok breakout. With a quickly-scaled-up three-night-stand in L.A. in two weeks previewing a major Coachella date next year, the pleasures of being – and the expectations on – Sombr are already formidable.

"Yeah, it's scary," Boose said. "I thought there was no possibility that I could ever have a hit song. I was making alternative rock inspired by people that I'm inspired by, and then it became what it is. I try to stay offline and just stay in the music. The last thing I want is for people's opinions, or me being in the public eye, to affect the art I'm creating."

When Boose calls in to chat post-rehearsal, he's still wrapping his head around the scale of the tour ahead of him, which will include two nights (Oct.28-29) at the 5,000-capacity Shrine Expo Hall with a bonus night in early November at the Fonda Theatre for good measure – arena-caliber numbers. Online and onstage, he's bitingly funny, roasting the matcha-sipping, Clairo-stanning performative-male stereotypes of his generation of softbois, while also dancing with a low-buttoned, Bowie-worthy swish at the MTV Video Music Awards.

"I actually think I perform better the bigger the crowd," he said. "There's always something awkward about the 300- to 500-capacity venues because you can see everyone's facial expression. That makes it a lot more nerve-racking. It's weird that I'm less afraid the more people there are."

By that measure, Sombr was practically born to be the Gen Z rock breakout in 2025. Boose, a native of New York City's Lower East Side, was raised by event planner and PR industry parents who worked with Elton John's AIDS Foundation and the nonprofit amfAR. He attended LaGuardia High School, home of alums like Timothée Chalamet and Nicki Minaj, but dropped out and moved to L.A. once Sombr took off in his teens with the spare and yearning single "Caroline."

With a city kid's gimlet-eyed savvy (and, it must be said, genetic-Powerball-winner good looks), Boose was likely bound for stardom at one thing or another. But on his records, even his self-produced early ones, there's a literary poise and dreamy loucheness that calls back to the imperious, wounded singers of his old neighborhood – the Strokes and Jeff Buckley in particular.

"I just saw that documentary 'It's Never Over, Jeff Buckley,' and I was bawling," Boose said. "'Grace' is my favorite record, but I expected him to be playing to way bigger crowds. It seems like he's gotten bigger since he died. I've never cried from a movie in my life, but that one had me in tears."

Sombr's ageless songs similarly could have taken off in any era; they just happened to arrive in one where millions of young people could watch him on TikTok at 18, wistfully staring down the camera from the back of a convertible in the amber L.A. magic hour on "Weak."

That mix of sultry pop charisma and sturdier, affecting songwriting is what drew Warner Records to sign him in 2023. Was this project bleary, distortion-fried indie-rock with a certain moon-eyed Babygirl appeal? Is Boose a nascent pop star who'd really rather be honing his pedalboard?

"Shane has as much talent as I've ever seen in an artist, but I don't really think about where he stands in relation to anyone else," said Chris Morris, a senior vice president of A&R at Warner Records. "He clearly reveres his influences, but what he's creating is entirely his own – unique to his process and perspective. I can only hope his music has the ability to impact his listeners the way that 'Grace' or 'Is This It' did for their generations."

Under Warner, he paired with producer Tony Berg (of Phoebe Bridgers and Boygenius fame) to find his footing musically in a famously tempting town for a young man on the rise.

"I moved out to L.A. right when I turned 18 when I got signed. I was supposed to be doing music, but I was going out with my buddies, like, five nights a week," Boose said. "I was like, 'Damn, I'm becoming a f— loser. Something just clicked in me at one point, and I got it together and stopped going out while all my friends still were. My only focus was on music all the time."

That head-down work ethic paid off on singles like "Back to Friends" and "Undressed," which landed in winter and spring with a preternatural skill for hooks and emotional heft. "Back to Friends" – a mid-tempo piano brooder, about the liminal post-hookup state between platonic and not – is viciously hummable, punctured with dramatic falsettos. "Undressed" is tender and pained in its chorus – "I don't want to get undressed for a new person all over again," he sings, before the shockingly mature and mournful confession at the bridge – "I don't want the children of another man/ To have the eyes of a girl I won't forget."

"I think there's a yearning for music with real instruments from real studios, with an intro, verse, chorus, prechorus and a real bridge. All those elements that the classics have that are not really present today in most pop," Boose said.

Landing two in a row helped him lose the jitters that he merely got lucky once. "I was like, OK, that's two hits in the span of a few months; I'm good for a bit," he said, laughing. "Definitely skipped the one-hit wonder thing pretty quick, which was a big fear of mine."

National fame came quickly thereafter. "His TV debut on Jimmy Fallon was really special. Performing live in front of a national TV audience for the first time is not easy, but he crushed it," said Sean Stevens, another senior vice president of A&R at Warner. "We were all standing off to the side, his family, his team and a few of us from the label, and it was like watching him become a superstar in real time. We were elated. He was elated. And we knew he was ready."

"Back to Friends" indeed hit No. 22, while "Undressed" peaked at 16. On the strength of those two singles, "I Barely Know Her" was good for a No. 10 debut on the album charts. For a generation slandered as sexless and terminally stilted, Sombr has done a hard trick – imbued indie rock with a generationally fresh, fully-articulated sense of young male desire and ran it up the pop charts.

Deeper album cuts like "We Never Dated" can call back to Bonnie Raitt ("I can't make you love me/ No, I can't make you love me"), or stir up some Frank O'Hara vibes on "Canal Street" ("This time last year I was putting up a tree in your place ... I'm still smoking cigarettes on my couch/ And it kills my mom, but it brings me back to you.") Even on "12 to 12," easily the most overtly pop single in his catalog, there's a handmade sizzle atop its four-on-the-floor thump, one that harkens back to Daft Punk's "Random Access Memories" or Bowie and Nile Rodgers' "Let's Dance." Addison Rae – the Main Pop Girl success story of the year so far – dropped in for a bedroom-eyed star turn dancing in its music video. But the song already feels destined for wedding dance floors decades from now.

"I love Addison, man. She's amazing," Boose said. "Working with her made me realize how grateful I am to be able to call up insanely talented people and create art that can live forever with them over, like, a weekend."

The two will cross paths at Coachella next year, when both young stars are booked second-line on Saturday. "I haven't been to Coachella, but it's on my Mt. Rushmore. Actually the only music festival I've ever been to is the one I just played in Japan," Boose said. What a trip to be a 20-year-old New York rocker seeing your name on equal Coachella footing with the Strokes, Interpol and David Byrne.

But actual fame for Sombr – the invasive, always-on-edge, you're-being-watched kind – is the one thing Boose hasn't gotten used to. Out in L.A., he's hard to miss – even if he wasn't a rock star, you'd assume he was one if you passed him at the Erewhon smoothie bar. While he's cuttingly funny about his own persona on his social media, he admits the culture of modern fame is nerve-racking and can poison the well for both songwriting and being your best self.

"I haven't adjusted," Boose admitted. "I wasn't prepared. Being a public figure, while I love it and I'm so grateful, I'd say my weakest and most vulnerable points, and when I'm the worst person is all related to that. I'm super lucky, but all the worst points of my life over the past six to eight months have been because it's f— hard being put under a microscope. But it's like the one negative in a world of so many positives. So I'm dealing with it."

"This thing impacts people differently and it can change hour by hour," Stevens said. "You never know what it's going to mean for someone until it starts to happen. What I do know is Shane is wise beyond his years and has an amazing support system to help carry him through all of it. He has an incredible family, a devoted team and a label that cares as deeply about his well-being as it does his career."

Boose is dealing with it by throwing himself back into writing for Album 2. Instead of going out, he's armed the tour bus with a recording studio to document this new phase of life amidst the rigors of fast stardom. When he plays those teenage singles like "Caroline," he does so now from a fond distance, one that he can't quite relate to even just a few years later.

"There's songs that I just f— hate, not because I was trying to put out lazy work, but because I was 16," Boose said. "The music that I'm making now has that feeling times 10."

"I can't put a pin on why it's happening," he added, wryly acknowledging that his view, for now, is looking up from the pool at the Chateau. "Something about all my dreams coming true, you know, it's working for me."

Sombr performs during the 2025 MTV Video Music Awards at UBS Arena on Sept. 7 in Elmont, New York.
Arturo Holmes / Getty Images for MTV / TNS

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

In a noisy world, the 2025 Honda Civic Sport Hatchback is quietly exceptional

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Honda / TNS

The 2025 Honda Civic Hatchback Sport Touring Hybrid.

The 2025 Honda Civic Sport Hatchback is not a Ferrari, not a Bentley, not a Porsche. It's a Civic. A hatchback. There's something deeply comforting about its continued existence even as too many buyers opt for SUVs big enough to blot out the sun, pickup trucks tall enough to require a Sherpa, and luxury EVs that glow like radioactive appliances. Thankfully, there are still buyers who prefer something simple, durable, always in style, and universally acceptable. You can pull up to the valet stand in America's favorite compact car since 1973, and while they won't mistake you for a movie star, they won't park you next to the dumpsters. It's the Labrador retriever of automobiles. Not glamorous. Not exotic. But endlessly faithful and always happy to go for a ride.

The Sport trim is the non-hybrid version of the 11th-generation Civic, with a starting price of $28,545. The Sport Hybrid and Sport Hybrid Touring models cost more – $32,140 and $35,140 respectively. And although they return an EPA-rated 48 mpg in combined city/highway fuel economy, this less-expensive Civic returns a still-noteworthy 34 mpg.

But the Civic Sport Hatchback is rebellion in plain sight. There's no V-8 rumble, no lift kit, no neon green paint. It's quiet rebellion, as Civic owners still think of driving as an activity, not a chore. So, the Civic comes with aggressive 18-inch wheels, despite its continuously variable transmission and a 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine that produces a mere 150 horsepower in a car that weighs less than 3,000 pounds. It's not fast, but it feels quick in the way a terrier feels big.

Drive it, and the Civic Hatchback provides precise steering and predictable turn-in. Toss it into a corner and it's more composed than any affordable hatchback has the right to be. No drama. No weird body float. Just tidy, accurate, Honda handling. It's the kind of car that makes the purgatory of daily commuting easy.

Slide into the cabin and you'll notice Honda's newfound obsession with honeycomb stretches across the dashboard like architectural jewelry. The dashboard vents are disguised behind a metal-mesh strip that's part Bauhaus, part Ikea. But it keeps the interior from looking like the inside of a microwave oven. Standard tech includes a 7-inch infotainment touchscreen, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, Bluetooth, Google, Alexa, dual USB-C ports and an 8-speaker 180-watt audio system. The seats? Cloth. Firm. Mounted low. And the back seat will actually fit adults, which makes you wonder why everyone insists on buying giant SUVs for the space when the Civic has enough room to smuggle half a dorm room.

The rear hatch provides 24.5 cubic feet with the seats up, which is enough to haul a full Costco run or, if you're me, an unassembled IKEA wardrobe you're going to regret buying. Fold the seats, and suddenly you could live in it. Thoreau didn't need Walden Pond; he needed a Honda Civic Sport Hatchback parked behind a strip mall.

And its price makes it a fire-sale bargain considering the average new-car transaction price is now orbiting north of $50,000. For that money you get a Civic that doesn't make you look like you gave up on life (like a Toyota Corolla), doesn't make you look like you're still on probation (Dodge Charger), and doesn't make you feel like you accidentally bought an air fryer with 19-inch wheels (every subcompact crossover).

The 2025 Honda Civic Sport Hatchback isn't heroic. It isn't aspirational. But in 2025, when cars have become gadgets, fashion statements or rolling monuments to insecurity, the Honda Civic Sport Hatchback is just a deeply, stubbornly good car. And that feels quietly revolutionary.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

2025 Honda Civic Sport Hatchback

Base price: $28,545

Engine: DOHC 2.0-liter four-cylinder

Horsepower/Torque: 150/133 pound-feet

EPA rating (combined city/highway): 34 mpg

Fuel required: 87 Octane

Length/Width/Height: 179/56/71 inches

Ground clearance: Not available

Payload: 850 pounds

Cargo capacity: 24.5 cubic feet

Towing capacity: Not rated

Road trippin' in the big, bold, boosted BMW X3

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

I made an easy drive this fall up Interstate 75 to Charlevoix. Cruising on adaptive cruise control at 80 mph, listening to Sirius XM. Navigating Google Maps on a jumbotron screen while taking in the fall colors. I could have been in any compact SUV.

But as I exited at Gaylord onto the challenging M-32 twisties, I selected the SPORT head-up display with digital racing tachometer, toggled the automatic shifter to manual SPORT mode, and engaged the shift/BOOST paddles sprouting from the steering wheel.

GRRRRRR! went the 255 ponies in front of me. Achtung! I'm in a BMW X3, all right.

I spent the next 25 miles conquering S-turns, long downhill sweepers and short straightaways while red-lining the eight-speed transmission. It was a welcome pick-me-up on a long road trip – and a welcome departure from the average SUV.

In truth, the average SUV is very, very, very good these days.

Since BMW unveiled its xActivity concept – the near-production peek at the first-gen, 2004 X3 – at the 2003 Detroit Auto Show (back when the Detroit show scored major BMW reveals), autodom has changed and compact utes have become the largest non-pickup segment in the U.S. market. Every major automaker from Acura to VW sells in the segment. Made in America, the X3 is BMW's best-selling U.S. model.

This competitive shark tank has created an impressively high standard for entry. Combine that with the electronics revolution, and the compact segment has democratized with little practical difference between mainstream and luxe offerings.

My $52K BMW X3's dual digital screen? The $30K Hyundai Tucson offers a similar unit. The X3's standard all-wheel-drive system? Same for the $31K Subaru Forester. The sporty, automatic chiclet shifter? The $32K VW Tiguan's got it. BMW's 255-horse turbo-4 engine? Yeah, yeah – check out the $42K Mazda CX-50 Turbo's 256-horsepower unit.

So to separate itself from the pack, X3 has leaned into BMW's heritage of design and performance.

Start with that big, bold kisser.

Current BMW design is bold and chunky – a throwback to the brand's 1940s-era vertical grilles. It's problematic on cars like the BMW 3-series sedan, but on more upright SUVs like X3, it fits. The twin-kidney grille is further distinguished by a striking, signature cross-hatch pattern. Love it.

That pattern is repeated inside: cross hatch on the console charger cubby, air vents, console volume knob – even the small steering wheel selector button. It's detail that sets X3 apart in a modern, screen-focused interior.

The screens themselves are flush with visual detail, from lush instrument display graphics to the sand-dune background on the infotainment screen to the layers of digital options (want the X3 to unlock/lock automatically as you approach/walk away? There's a setting for that). They were a welcome companion on the long interstate drive.

Another notable detail: BMW has – like mainstream automakers – deferred navigation to Google Maps. The cloud-based Google ecosystem includes apps we commonly use on our phones. Standard (as with other brands) is a wireless charging pad so your phone doesn't run out of juice while navigating your route).

I navigated my northern trip while listening to Sirus XM. BMW fully integrates those apps to show turn-by-turn directions in the head-up display and station listings in the instrument cluster.

All this tech is housed in a chunky interior design – accented with ambient lighting – as distinctive as the exterior. Check out the meaty door controls and console. More clever detail? Door inserts that hold tall drink bottles.

One detail I could do without is the big rotary infotainment screen controller. Bimmer pioneered this feature in the early 2000s as a symbol of luxury – since copied by aspirational brands like Mazda and Genesis seeking to show their good taste. But the feature has become an anomaly in the touchscreen age, with even Mazda reportedly abandoning it for its next-gen vehicles.

BMW long ago made the rotary controller redundant, and I navigated the instrument screen by touch. Mostly. I have to admit the rotary dial is handy when driving, so I didn't have to take my eyes off the road when reaching for the screen to, say, change the channel in Sirius XM. But for most folks who rode with me, the controller just takes up valuable console real estate.

Much of the X3's design theme was first seen on the iX electric SUV, which, in turn, had adopted Tesla-inspired digital tech that has transformed vehicle interiors over the past 10 years. But X3 does this while also offering the inherent advantages of gas power.

While stomping all over northern Michigan with my right lead foot, I never worried about range anxiety from the 2.0-liter turbo-4 engine. With a 17.2-gallon gas tank, the X3 sported an impressive 568 miles of range that could get me to Charlevoix and back to Metro Detroit without visiting a gas station.

By contrast, the pricier, all-wheel-drive electric i4 compact sedan (an electric version of the X3 is not due until next year) gets just 227 miles of range and would likely require at least three lengthy charging stops on a round-trip Charlevoix journey.

The Bimmer emphasizes cargo room (large for the class) over rear-seat legroom (small for the class). I was able to stuff the trunk with all my gear for a weekend trip, while also comfortably fitting a foursome for an evening trip to Charlevoix Pickleball courts.

The foursome had varying views on the Bimmer's styling ("nice," "too chunky," "Porsche Macan is sleeker"), while my friend Jon enjoyed sticking the tranny in SPORT mode and playing with the head-up display's tachometer. Boys will be boys.

Speaking of Porsche, on the trip back south I played with the BOOST paddle. Porsche popularized this "Push to Pass" feature in its sports cars, and it quickly spread among other performance brands.

BOOST instantly shifts the transmission into the optimal torque gear, redlining the engine for 10 seconds. I used the tool liberally to pass cars on two-lane roads.

Want to lean more into BMW's sporty toolbox? Another 15 grand will buy you one of BMW's legendary inline-6 cylinder, 393-horsepower, turbocharged engines. Ausgezeichnet!

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2025 BMW X3

★★★

Vehicle type: Front-engine, all-wheel-drive, five-passenger SUV

Price: $50,675, including $1,175 destination fee ($60,875 xDrive 30i with M Sport Package as tested)

Powerplant: 2.0-liter, turbocharged inline-4 cylinder; 3.0-liter, turbocharged inline-6 cylinder

Power: 255 horsepower, 295 pound-feet of torque (I-4); 393 horsepower, 428 pound-feet of torque (I-6)

Transmission: 8-speed automatic

Performance: 0-60 mph, 6.0 seconds (mfr.); towing, 4,850 pounds

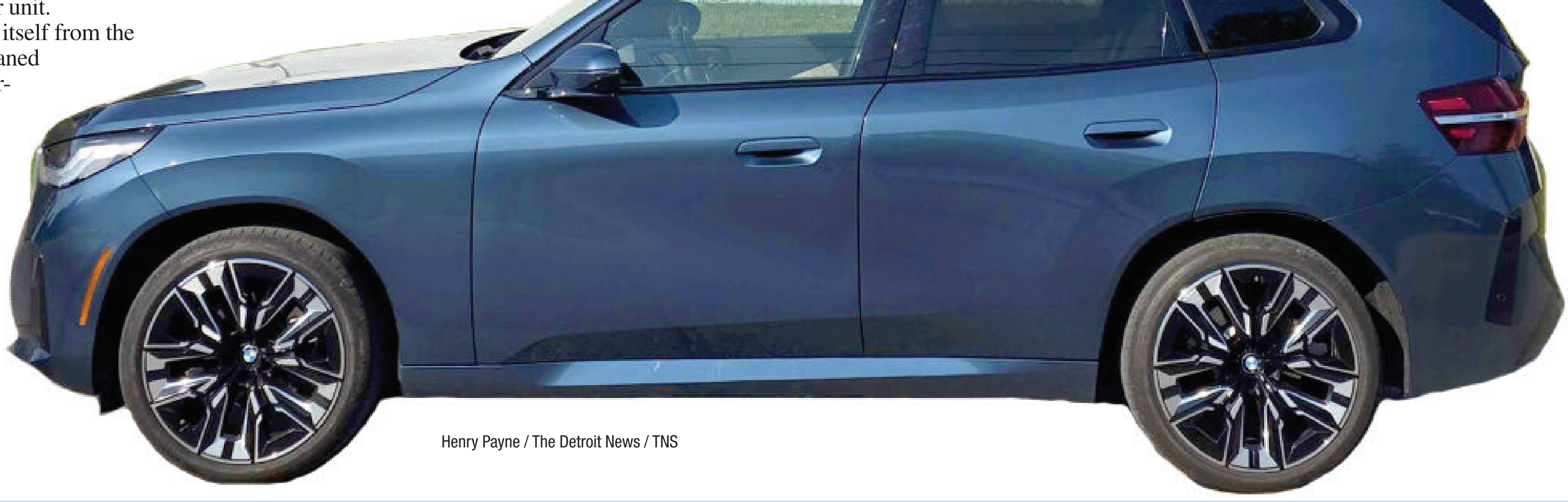
Weight: 4,535 pounds

Fuel economy: EPA, 27 mpg city/33 highway/29 combined (I-4); 25 mpg city/30 highway/27 combined (I-6); range: 568 miles as tested

Report card

Highs: Distinctive looks; performance features

Lows: Looks can be polarizing; turbo-4 lacks BMW brand uniqueness



Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

TECHNOLOGY

TECH REVIEW

iPhone 17 Pro Max

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

New iPhone day is one of my favorite days of the year, and this year Apple shook things up a bit.

The last few years of new iPhone day have largely involved Apple releasing two "regular" iPhones (like the 16 and 16 Plus) and two "Pro" phones (16 Pro and 16 Pro Max).

This year Apple introduced three iPhone 17 models – the iPhone 17, 17 Pro and 17 Pro Max – and they introduced the iPhone Air, which is thinner and lighter than any other previous model.

Apple was nice enough to send over the iPhone 17 Pro Max and iPhone Air to review, and for the last few weeks I've been using the 17 Pro Max. I'll switch my number over and review the iPhone Air next month.

I mention the iPhone Air because I think Apple is making a fundamental change in how they position their phones.

Designing phones has always been a delicate dance of making them thin, light and easy to carry, on the one hand, and making them powerful and with a battery that lasts all day.

With the iPhone Air, Apple can go after the "I want a thinner, lighter phone" user, while on the other models they can make changes such as making them thicker to increase the size of the battery.

So what's new?

The iPhone 17 Pro Max runs on the new A19 Pro CPU inside a unibody made of heat-forged aluminum. The A19 Pro has six CPU cores and six GPU (graphics) cores.

The back of the phone has a feature found in some Android phones called a vapor chamber, which is a small, sealed metal pouch that holds a tiny amount of deionized water. As the phone is used, the internals heat up, causing the water to boil, and then the steam drips the water back over the metal insides of the chamber. The chamber keeps the phone a few degrees cooler, which really helps keep the CPU running more efficiently.

The 6.9-inch Super Retina XDR OLED display has HDR and an adaptive refresh rate up to 120Hz. The screen has a peak brightness of 3,000 nits and can dim down to just one nit.

The dynamic island on the top of the screen houses the facial recognition sensor as well as the new selfie camera. The screen is protected by Ceramic Shield 2, which has three times the scratch resistance of previous glass.

The Pro Max is designed with a larger camera bump that almost spans the width of the phone. Apple calls the enlarged bump the "plateau" and it houses more than just three cameras.

The plateau also houses much of the guts of the CPU, storage and communication (Wi-Fi and cellular radios). The grouping of much of the phone's internals at the top leaves a lot of room below for the 5,088 milliamp-hour battery, which is the largest battery Apple has ever put in a phone.

Apple says the battery is their best ever and provides up to four more hours of use compared to the battery in the 15 Pro Max. I didn't specifically run down the battery, but I did regularly charge it up to 100 percent and used it all day without charging until bedtime.

I never ran the battery down below 30 percent during my days, which I'd consider pretty heavy use.

When it's time to recharge, if you use a high-wattage USB port, you can charge from zero to 50 percent in just 20 minutes. It also has 25-watt MagSafe charging that can provide 50 percent charge in 30 minutes.

Apple also upped the minimum storage to 256 gigabytes. You can bump that up to two terabytes.

Communication includes Wi-Fi 7, Bluetooth 6 and 5G UWB and satellite connection for emergency SOS, Messages and Find My.

Cameras

All three cameras on the plateau have 48-megapixel sensors that provide views from .5x wide angle up to 8x telephoto. If you know 35mm photography, the lens range is equivalent of 24mm to 200mm.

The quality of the main cameras is impressive. I shot stills and 4K video at a concert and I was very pleased with the results.

The front camera is an 18MP center stage camera, which uses software to keep you centered in the frame during a video conference. It has a square sensor that has a trick up its sleeve – you can hold the camera like you're taking a vertical selfie but touch a button on the screen to change the image to a horizontal if a friend or two wants to join you in the shot. No more awkwardly holding the phone sideways for a selfie.

Do you need one?

Making a recommendation for people to upgrade is always tricky.

There's a certain group of people who line up on new iPhone day to buy the newest model.

I'm lucky I get to try them out each year, but the last phone I actually bought is an iPhone 13 Pro Max that still performs perfectly for me.

So, who should be looking at upgrading?

I think iPhone 13 and 14 users should seriously consider it. Apple has moved over to USB-C charging and the processors, screens and cameras have really improved.

Also keep in mind older phones won't necessarily be compatible with the newest version of iOS. The iPhone 11 models are the oldest that are still iOS 26-compatible, so I expect those will not be supported in iOS 27.

Phones older than the 15 models are also not compatible with Apple Intelligence features.

I'm likely going to retire my 13 Pro Max and choose an iPhone 17 model later this year.

I think the improved cameras, especially the lens range, is a breakthrough feature. I also am a big fan of more battery life.

The iPhone had been stuck in a bit of a design rut – I can't really tell a 13 from a 16 visually – but the 17 models really stand out with improvements inside and out.

Pricing and availability

The 17 Pro Max is available in silver, cosmic orange and deep blue (no black this year), with a starting price of $1,199 with 256GB of storage. Bumping up to 512GB is $1,399, 1TB is $1,599 and 2TB will set you back $1,999. They are available from Apple stores and Apple.com as well as Amazon, Best Buy and the usual retail outlets, including the major phone carriers.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

GADGETS

This cooler is the life of the party

Trinity / TNS
The Trinity 80.

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

When I showed the **Trinity 80** quart stainless steel cooler to some friends who are dedicated tailgaters at weekly college football games, their eyes lit up, and their mouths were wide open.

The new rolling cooler has many features, but what really sold them on it was that it keeps 96 12-ounce cans cold for up to 24 hours, from pregame to any overtime.

On the sides of the cooler are collapsible shelves, which work perfectly as serving tables for snacks. Each shelf can support up to 20 pounds. A bottom shelf is built into the four legs for extra storage. If bottles are your thing, there is a built-in opener with a cap catcher right below.

When the game is over and you're packing up, fold down the shelves and open the drainage plug. A weather-resistant cover is included, featuring straps that tighten at the bottom to keep it in place during bad weather.

If tailgating isn't your thing, roll the cooler easily with its four swivel wheels anywhere – poolside, on the patio, on a camping trip, wherever it's needed. Find a home for it and then secure it in place with the locking wheels.

The Trinity 80 is built for durability, featuring a cooler tub made from 304-grade stainless steel. Its shelf, legs, side tables and lid are crafted from steel with a white powder-coated finish. Key components such as the bottle opener, cap catcher, hinges, latch and drainage plug are also made from stainless steel.

With the shelves folded down, the Trinity 80 measures 37.5 inches wide, 18.5 inches deep, and 35 inches high. Each fold-out shelf measures 9.5 by 15 by 3.2 inches. Putting the cooler together is straightforward for one person.

The only negative: It does not include ice and beverages; you're on your own for those.

https://trinityii.com/products/trinity-80-quart-stainless-steel-cooler-w-foldable-side-shelves-cover

* * *

With the new iPhone 17 landing in customers' hands daily, it's no surprise that Smartish – an Austin, Texas-based smartphone accessory maker – has rolled out some of the coolest and most innovative products to support Apple's latest release.

First, if you're not familiar with MagSafe, you need to be. It's been built into the iPhones for many years. It started with the iPhone 12 in 2020. MagSafe is a magnetic attachment inside the back of the phone that allows for wireless charging and the attachment of various accessories, many of which are designed and built by Smartish.

The Wallflower is a 3-in-1 MagSafe device that attaches magnetically to the back of the phone, providing a multitasking accessory that functions as a finger grip, kickstand, and suction mount. Once it's connected, fear not – it's not permanent. As strong as the MagSafe magnet is, you can easily attach and remove a device.

The Wallflower ($24.99) attaches and folds out the back half, then rotates to reveal seven small silicone suction cup rings. They allow it to easily attach to a smooth surface, such as a bathroom mirror. The finger loop folds out for a secure one-hand grip, and the kickstand folds out for hands-free viewing.

The Case Clinger Crossbody Sling ($39.99) is an adjustable strap that keeps your iPhone securely attached. It can be worn around your neck or crossbody. A Fidlock magnetic buckle is included to clip the iPhone on and off in seconds. A rotating carabiner attaches the strap to the buckle and remains tangle-free. The Fidlock also has room to attach keys.

Smartish / TNS
The Smartish Wallflower.

The slim and pocket-friendly Gripmunk case is simple, keeps your phone protected, and is MagSafe compatible with pass-through access. It's built with drop protection, tested 50 times from six feet. It's built with air pockets in the corners, which act like mini shock absorbers during accidental drops and bumps. MagSafe magnets let you use accessories on the case with a secure attachment. Raised edges are around the screen and camera lenses, which allow full access to the features while also providing a safety buffer.

The Mountaineer MagSafe car mount is designed to attach your iPhone to the dashboard for hands-free viewing. But my sample of the Mountaineer has made my desktop its home, right next to my monitor. The base has a 3M secure attachment, and the MagSafe mount is attached to it with a swivel bullhead. Wherever you use it, it provides a secure attachment for viewing from any angle.

Smartish / TNS
The Case Clinger Crossbody Sling.

A MagSafe ring adapter kit, extra 3M adhesive, alcohol and dry wipes are included.

Smartish has a load of other handy and innovative smartphone accessories that have come out over the years. It's worth your time to surf their site. Among my favorites are the Tuff Sheet tempered glass privacy screens and the legendary Cable Wrangler cable organizer.

Smartish's Design Studio will offer unique customizations for select cases. It's as easy as selecting your case, uploading your artwork (which can be a logo, picture, text, etc.) and then checking out. A few days later, it arrives in the mail.

https://smartish.com

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

Should you use generic ink?

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

This week's reader question is, "Has the quality of remanufactured ink improved in recent years? It was a no-no for a long time."

This is a good question. The answer will depend on a lot of things – including who you are asking.

Inkjet printers and their ink are a lot like razors and blades. The manufacturers will sell you a razor (or printer) fairly cheaply because they know you'll have to keep buying the blades (and ink), hopefully for a long time.

Inkjet printers include a set of ink, but what many people don't realize is that the included ink is just a starter set, and the cartridges are only partially filled. You'll be buying more ink sooner than you think – and a full set of color ink can cost almost as much as the printer.

Generic ink is cheaper and most of us have contemplated it.

Should you try it?

HP's website says, "While it's possible to use off-brand ink in most printers, it's important to consider potential risks such as reduced print quality, reliability issues, and possible warranty implications. Always check your printer's manual and warranty information before using off-brand ink."

Epson says, "Epson ink cartridge printers are designed for use with Epson cartridges only, not third-party cartridges or ink. Epson periodically provides firmware updates to address issues of security, performance, minor bug fixes and ensure your printer functions as designed. Your printer was designed to work with genuine Epson ink cartridges; therefore, some updates may affect the functionality of third-party ink. Such restrictions can be avoided with some other printers such as Epson EcoTank cartridge-free printers, which use ink bottles."

The Epson EcoTank printers use ink in bottles, and they say you'll get two years' worth of ink with your printer, but the printers are more expensive than the kind that use ink from cartridges.

So what's my take?

If your printer is out of warranty, you don't have much to lose trying generic ink, but at my house, I use an EcoTank.

Lastly, my best advice to keep your inkjet printer happy is to use it regularly. If you let the inkjet nozzles dry out, the only way to revive them is to pump ink through to unclog them. That'll just cost more money – for more ink or a whole new printer.

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EPSON
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Epson ink bottles.
Jim Rossman / TNS

HOME&GARDEN

DESIGN RECIPES

Punch things up with pastels

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service

Pastel colors can provide softness and neutrality to nearly any room of the home. From living spaces to dining areas and bedrooms, these soothing colors can also bring a sense of lightness and serenity.

Looking for ways to infuse pastels into your home? Here are some top tips.

1. Balance with neutrals. Pair pastel colors with neutral colors such as white, cream or gray for a fresh, modern look.

2. Mix pastel colors with natural and organic materials. Natural elements such as wood, rattan and linen can bring warmth and texture to pastel palettes.

3. Use pastel colors as accents. Try pastel artwork, throw pillows or a painted accent wall to introduce pastel colors into a space.

4. Consider layering pastel colors to create a cohesive, soothing color palette. Powder blue, blush pink and even mint can work beautifully when layered.

5. Add elements of "bling" such as metallics. Gold, brass or chrome accents elevate pastel colors to add elements of luxury and glamour.

6. Don't overdo it. Too many pastel elements in one space can feel overwhelming or flat. Balance is key, so anchor the look with grounding shades or bold accents.

7. Pay attention to lighting. Pastel colors shine best in bright, natural light. In darker rooms, enhance them with layered lighting such as sconces, table lamps or mirrors that reflect light.

8. Infuse contrast to add depth. Pair soft pastel shades with deeper colors like navy, charcoal or forest green to create dimension and prevent the space from looking too delicate.

9. Consider pastel colors in more formal areas such as living rooms. While often associated with nurseries, pastels like powder blue and blush pink can feel chic and sophisticated in living rooms, dining areas and even kitchens.

10. Bring in pattern and texture. Stripes, florals and geometric designs in pastel shades can add personality, while textured fabrics such as velvet or boucle keep the look from feeling one note.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."

Handout photos / TNS

Powder blue accents highlight a living room with a complimenting color palette.

Cheerful stripes in pastel pink are paired with textured pillows in this child's room.

Layered neutrals with soft powder pink pillows highlight artwork with a hint of pink.

How should I prepare my floors for winter?

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

As temperatures drop and winter settles in, your floors take a beating, from muddy boots to melting snow, road salt and the general mess of cold-weather living. While it might not be the first thing on your seasonal checklist, floor maintenance in winter is essential.

Cold, moisture and grime can quickly wear down finishes, cause stains and shorten the lifespan of your flooring. But with the right approach, you can keep your floors clean, protected and looking great all season long. From hardwood to tile to carpet, here's how to get your floors winter-ready.

Sweep and vacuum more often

Regular cleaning matters more than ever in the winter months. Dirt, salt and debris tracked inside can scratch surfaces and wear down flooring over time. Start by sweeping or vacuuming hard floors like tile, wood, vinyl and laminate at least once a week (more often if you have kids or pets.) For rugs and carpet, vacuum at least twice a week to keep buildup under control.

Keeping debris off your floors not only improves appearance but helps preserve finishes and fibers. The cleaner your floors stay, the longer they'll last.

Mop with care

Mopping is a critical step, but it's easy to go overboard and cause moisture damage. Use just a couple of tablespoons of cleaning solution per bucket of water and avoid soaking your mop. Excess water can seep into floorboards or between laminate planks, leading to swelling or warping.

Different floors require different approaches:

HARDWOOD: Use a microfiber mop and a wood-safe cleaner. Avoid vinegar and harsh soaps. Only use a steam mop if your floors are sealed and the steam output is light.

LAMINATE: A damp microfiber mop and mild detergent work best. Avoid anything oily or abrasive.

VINYL: Mop with a gentle detergent. Don't use steam, which can bubble the surface.

TILE: Use a chamois or rag mop with a mild cleaner. Sponge mops tend to push dirt into grout.

STONE: Use a pH-neutral cleaner for sealed stone. For unsealed surfaces, stick with hot water and a microfiber mop.

Stop dirt at the door

Keeping outdoor messes from ever making it inside is one of the easiest and most effective strategies. Set up sturdy doormats at every entrance and clean them often. Encourage everyone to take off shoes when entering the house, especially if they've been walking through snow or ice melt.

Keep an old towel near the door to wipe off boots and dry off pet paws. These small steps can go a long way in keeping your floors clean and dry.

Tackle stains immediately

Spills, slush and salt can leave stains if they sit too long. Always clean up moisture right away, especially on wood or laminate floors. Use only cleaning products that are safe for your specific flooring type. Your manufacturer's guide should have information about how to safely clean up stains.

Keep pets clean and trimmed

Pets can bring in mud, moisture and hair, which can all take a toll on floors. Brush them regularly to reduce shedding and trim their nails to prevent scratches. Wipe paws after walks, especially when there's salt or snow on the ground. Clean up any accidents right away to avoid staining and odors.

Minimize wear with protective measures

Prevention goes a long way when it comes to preserving floors. Use rugs or runners in high-traffic areas like entryways and hallways. Add felt pads to the bottom of furniture legs and place trays under potted plants to prevent water damage. If you're rearranging furniture for holiday decorating or entertaining, use sliders to avoid scratching hard floors.

Winter weather is tough on floors, but a little maintenance now can prevent big repairs later. With consistent cleaning, the right products and a few preventative habits, your floors can stay in great shape all season long.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Dreamstime / TNS

Regular mopping or vacuuming is one of the most basic but important steps in ensuring long life for your floors.

EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE
PROTECT OUR VOTE!

Elijah Nouvelage / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

People march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge during commemorations of the 60th anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday' on March 9 in Selma, Alabama.

Must-visit civil rights *destinations* in the U.S.

By NOREEN KOMPANIK
TravelPulse (TNS)

The fight for American civil rights spanned decades, cities and states, from Topeka, Kansas to Memphis, Tennessee and from Atlanta, Georgia to Selma, Alabama and all the way to our nation's capital in Washington, D.C.

Many U.S. cities played pivotal roles in the Civil Rights Movement and continue to honor that legacy through museums, memorials, and historic sites. These are some of the not-to-be-missed destinations that offer compelling stories about the battle for human rights and equality.

Birmingham, Alabama

Birmingham was considered the epicenter of change during the Civil Rights movement. Opened in 1992, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution is a powerful and immersive museum documenting segregation and activism.

The 16th Street Baptist Church remains a potent reminder of the struggle between good and evil. A basement bomb planted by Ku Klux Klan members exploded on the morning of Sept. 15, 1963, killing four young Black girls in their church robes preparing to join the choir for a Sunday service.

Kelly Ingram Park, just across from the church features poignant sculptures and memorials commemorating Civil Rights protests.

Montgomery, Alabama

Rosa Parks' arrest here sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott when she made the decision not to give up her seat to a white passenger on a public bus. She later said, "I knew someone had to take the first step. So, I made up my mind not to move." Her boycott helped ignite the Civil Rights Movement.

The Rosa Parks Museum is the only one in the U.S. dedicated solely to Parks and the legacy of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Visitors can also see the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice honoring the victims of racial terror lynchings.

Atlanta

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born and raised in Atlanta. His message of nonviolence was shaped at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where he and his father both served as pastors.

Visitors can view King's birth home and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, a modern museum with interactive exhibits that connects the Civil Rights Movement to global human rights struggles.

Greensboro, North Carolina

On February 1, 1960, four Black college students sat down at the "whites-only" lunch counter inside a Greensboro Woolworth's department store and asked to be served. They were refused but stayed seated until the end of the day. For the next five months, the "Greensboro Four" returned every day to do the same.

Almost 300 students joined in the growing non-violent protest that continued past Woolworth's, giving birth to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Six months later, blacks were served at that very counter. "The Battlegrounds," is a permanent at the International Civil Rights Center and Museum installation that centers on the quest for equality, features pictorials, video re-enactments, interactive components and artifacts, including the lunch counter and stools where the students sat.

Topeka, Kansas

In the fall of 1950, the parents of 20 Black children attempted to register them in local public schools. All were denied because of race. Thus began the fight resulting in the Supreme Court overturning segregated education nationwide in the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision in May 1954.

Today, the former Monroe Elementary School is a National Historic Site and museum mapping the history of racism and segregation in the U.S. A mural across the street from the school depicts the march toward equality with images of key figures from the Civil Rights Movement.

Little Rock, Arkansas

The Little Rock integration crisis was one of the most pivotal and widely known events in the early Civil Rights Movement, centered around efforts to desegregate public schools following the landmark Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education.

The battle for integration started at Little Rock Central High School on September 4, 1957, when nine Black students attempted to enter the "all white" school. The Governor ordered the Arkansas National Guard to block the students, followed by President Eisenhower's actions to federalize the Arkansas National Guard under his authority.

The courage of these nine students who were constantly threatened and harassed is noteworthy. Today, visitors can tour the high school the National Historic Site (even while in session) and explore a compelling film and exhibits at the Visitor Center honoring the legacy of these brave warriors.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi

This town played a very significant role in the Civil Rights Movement, especially around voting rights, Freedom Summer, and community organizing in an attempt to break down Jim Crow barriers.

Built in 1921 as the first brick school building for Black students in Mississippi, Eureka, the school has been restored and now functions as a civil rights museum, focusing especially on Black voter registration work in Freedom Summer.

One of the area's biggest draws is the "Freedom Summer Trail" a self-drive-and-audio tour with 16 stops that trace Civil Rights sites in the city.

Selma, Alabama

Before 1965, the world didn't know Selma, Alabama. But that all changed when the iconic Edmund Pettus Bridge became the site of "Bloody Sunday" where 600 peaceful marchers were violently attacked by Alabama State Troopers as they attempted to head to Montgomery. The late Senator John Lewis who led the march was brutally beaten along with other Civil Rights leaders and participants.

The Edmund Pettus Bridge is now a National Historic Landmark and symbol of civil rights struggle and perseverance. Located near the bridge, the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute preserves artifacts, photos, and stories, and Brown Chapel AME Church, the Headquarters for many of the Selma marches is still an active place of worship.

Jackson, Mississippi

Jackson is often described as "the heart" of the Civil Rights struggle as so many defining events, leaders, institutions, and conflicts central to the fight for racial justice took place here.

Medgar Evers was one of the most important civil rights leaders in Mississippi. He was based in Jackson, led the Mississippi NAACP, campaigned fiercely for voter registration, desegregation, and legal equality. His murder in 1963 galvanized national attention.

Jackson was one of the first places where groups of integrated Freedom Riders were arrested when they tried to break segregation in interstate travel. Sit-ins, protests and boycotts of lunch-counters, department stores and public libraries that discriminated against Black customers became frequent sites of direct action.

The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum now preserves the stories, artifacts, and memories of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi and The Old Greyhound Bus Station where many Freedom Rider arrests took place are important landmarks. The Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument represents the house where Evers lived and was assassinated.

Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis played a major and deeply tragic role in the Civil Rights Movement, remembered for its labor struggles and site of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination. The day before he was shot and killed by James Earl Ray on April 4, 1968, he gave his final speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop" at Mason Temple.

Almost as if it were a premonition, he told the massive crowd, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

The following morning, he was assassinated on his balcony of the Lorraine Motel. Today, visitors can take in the National Civil Rights Museum at the former motel. Built around the site of Dr. King's assassination, the museum includes Room 306 (where King stayed) and poignant exhibits on Jim Crow laws, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Voting Rights, The Poor People's Campaign and Black Power and more.

Washington, D.C.

Our nation's capital has long been a pivotal center for the Civil Rights Movement serving as the seat of national power, the stage for historic demonstrations, and the focal point for legislative change. Civil rights leaders targeted Congress, the White House, and the Supreme Court, pressing for laws and rulings to dismantle segregation and protect Black Americans' rights.

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, was the most iconic civil rights demonstration in U.S. history. Over 250,000 people gathered on the National Mall to demand an end to segregation, voting rights protections, economic justice and equal education and housing.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered the famous "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, forever linking D.C. to the heart of the Civil Rights Movement.

TRAVEL TIPS

10 tips from actual kids on reconnecting with your childlike sense of wonder

LOS ANGELES — I thought I'd noticed everything on the four-mile stretch of the Gabrielino Trail from its western trailhead near Pasadena to the Gould Mesa campground in Angeles National Forest.

I have a favorite sycamore tree about a mile in that, if it weren't surrounded by poison oak, I would climb. I know some of the best water spots to splash around in the Arroyo Seco. I know how to identify and spot sacred datura, a common sight along the path.

But then I hiked the trail with a group of children (and a handful of grown-ups) from the L.A.-based adventure club Hiking Adventures With Kids (or HAWKs for short) and was reconnected with the childhood sense of wonder that our day-to-day adult lives grind down.

I saw the trail through the eyes of tweens who love nature so much, they screamed multiple facts at me, often all at once, including how cool vampire squid are, that roly-pollies are related to crabs and that my skin was actively dying and falling off my body. It was such a comfort.

Here's what I learned from my new trail buddies. I hope these tips help remind you to slow down and appreciate the wonders of our local flora and fauna.

1. A group of canines being walked on the trail by a human is a 'dog parade.'

Wave accordingly.

2. If you see poison oak, tell a friend.

These kids saved me multiple times from brushing up against the woody shrub. They reminded me: "Leaves of three, let it be; if it's hairy, it's a berry!"

3. Eggnog.

This is less of a tip and more of an inside joke between best friends Lila and Elliot, both 10, who asked really nicely for me to include it. May they forever remember the time one of the largest newspapers in America published this.

4. Put animals down that don't want to be touched.

Bradley Rydholm, a HAWKs educator co-leading the day's hike, found a diabolical ironclad beetle to show the kids. It was at first playing dead, and some of the children reached out to touch it.

"You need to put him down because he looks like he doesn't want to be touched," Kaija, 8, said. "If they're moving in your hand, that means it's OK, but if they're playing dead, you gotta put them back."

Rydholm gently agreed and placed the beetle back in its pile of dirt and leaves.

5. When naming bugs, consider a compromise.

OK, perhaps this is a lesson the kids learned from me. The group was in a debate over whether to name the aforementioned diabolical ironclad beetle, with some voting for "Desi" and others voting for "Jim."

This reporter, in the name of peace, suggested Desi Jim. "Bye, Desi Jim!" they called in unison as we continued onward.

6. Follow the ethics of frog catching.

Kaija, who asked whether I could make her a wolf in my story, told me that it's best to catch frogs, name them and then release them.

I asked her whether she had any tips for naming frogs. "Jeremy, Fred, Pineapple," she said, adding that she names them by their color.

I wanted to learn what color Jeremy was, but she discovered something far more interesting than me on the trail and ran off.

7. If you want to touch a bug, take a picture first.

Ella, 8, told me that after you take a picture of the insect, you can use a smartphone to identify it and figure out whether it is venomous. (Note: Unlike plenty of adults, she knew the difference between "poisonous" and "venomous" and used the words correctly!)

"If it isn't [venomous] and it's totally safe, I would probably bring gloves because I'm scared of picking up bugs," Ella said. "One time a lady bug peed on me."

8. It is important to have a compass.

"Because if you get lost, it's not very efficient to always rely on the North Star. Because it's only around for a little bit [of] time. So if you don't have a compass and you get lost, you're going to have to wait until night to be able to move," said Luca, 9, who bought himself a compass in a local shop in Felton.

Luca and I swapped adventure stories, as he is quite the world traveler. As a bonus tip, he informed me that it's easier to roast marshmallows on a volcano (he visited one in Guatemala) than over a campfire. The volcano's heat slow roasts the marshmallows; with a campfire, you're more likely to accidentally light them on fire.

9. Avoid hills.

A few of the kids recently went on a HAWKs hike that apparently involved a "death road" that felt like "the stairwell of a million stairs" that went "pretty much nowhere" and had no real views, per Luca's description.

Elliot, when asked for tips that adults should consider while hiking, told me that she enjoys being outside, but "I don't really like going uphill."

Same, girl. Same.

10. Appreciate the beauty of nature.

"I really like water," Luca said. "Just enjoy the sound of water and just enjoy the nature, and check out the animals, lizards, snakes, butterflies and moths."

"It's really beautiful to see all these paths," Lila said. "The beauty of nature is so fun, and it's a good way to get a workout in or just get off screens because kids these days are on screens a lot. Brain rot!"

"I just remember it's really good for me," Elliot said. "The same thing about screens too, even though I don't have an iPad since my brother broke it. ... Honestly, I don't want to think about anything from school or anything. Just want to be in the moment, ya know?"

– Jaclyn Cosgrove / Los Angeles Times (TNS)